GUESSES AT THE RIDDLE OF EXISTENCE


The MMCo.

GUESSES AT

THE RIDDLE OF EXISTENCE

AND

OTHER ESSAYS ON KINDRED SUBJECTS

BY

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PREFACE

Of the papers in this volume three have appeared before; two in the *North American Review*, one in the *Forum*, to the editors of which, respectively, the writer's thanks are due for their courtesy in permitting the republication. The writer has also once or twice drawn on previous papers of his own.

For such of the essays as have appeared in print some inquiries have been made. Those who desire to read them again are probably of the same mind as the writer, and with him believe that there is no longer any use in clinging to the untenable or in shutting our eyes to that which cannot be honestly denied. The educated world, and to a great extent the uneducated world also, has got beyond the point at which frank dealing with a traditional creed can be regarded as a wanton disturbance of faith.

Liberal theologians have at least half resigned the belief in miracles, rationalizing wherever they can and minimizing where that process fails. Liberal theologians, and even theologians by no means ranked as liberal, if they are learned and open-minded, have given up the authenticity and authority of Genesis. With these they must apparently give up the Fall, the Redemption, and the Incarnation. After this, little is left of the ecclesiastical creeds for criticism to destroy.

If there is anything which, amidst all these doubts and perplexities, our nature tells us, it is that our salvation must lie in our uncompromising allegiance to the truth. It is hoped that nothing in these pages will be found fairly open to the charge of irreverence or of want of tenderness in dealing with the creed which is still that of men who are the salt of the earth.

If much is, for the present, lost, let us remember that there is also much from which by the abandonment of dogmatic tradition we are relieved. If, on the one hand, the old arguments for theism and immortality have failed us, and the face of the Father in heaven is for

the moment veiled, on the other hand we are set free from the belief that all who go not in by the strait gate, that is, the greater part of mankind, are lost for ever; from belief in the God of Dante, with his everlasting torture-house; from belief in the God of Predestination, who arbitrarily rejects half his creatures and dooms them to eternal fire. That which in a good sermon has most practical effect will probably survive its ecclesiastical or theological form.

The spirit in which these pages are penned is not that of Agnosticism, if Agnosticism imports despair of spiritual truth, but that of free and hopeful inquiry, the way for which it is necessary to clear by removing the wreck of that upon which we can found our faith no more.

To resign untenable arguments for a belief is not to resign the belief, while a belief bound up with untenable arguments will share their fate.

Where the conclusions are, or seem to be, negative, no one will rejoice more than the writer to see the more welcome view reasserted and fresh evidence of its truth supplied.

If, as our hearts tell us, there is a Supreme Being, he cares for us; he knows our perplexities; he has his plan. If we seek truth, he will enable us in due time to find it. Whether we find it cannot matter to him; it may conceivably matter to him whether we seek it.

The reader will look for no attempt to discuss recondite questions, documentary or historical. Nothing is attempted here beyond the presentation of a plain case for a practical purpose to the ordinary reader.

It may be thought presumptuous in a layman to write on these subjects, though his interest in them is as great as that of the clergy. Would that the clergy could write with perfect freedom.

TORONTO, January, 1897.

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NEVER before has the intellect of man been brought so directly face to face with the mystery of existence as it is now. Some veil of religious tradition has always been interposed. At the beginning of this century most minds still rested in the Mosaic cosmogony and the Noachic deluge. Greek speculation was free, and its freedom makes it an object of extreme interest to us at the present time. But it was not intensely serious; it was rather the intellectual amusement of a summer day in Academe beneath the whispering plane.

No one who reads and thinks freely can doubt that the cosmogonical and historical foundations of traditional belief have been sapped by science and criticism. When the crust shall fall in, appears to be a question of time, and the moment can hardly fail to be one

of peril ; not least in the United States, where education is general and opinion spreads rapidly over a level field, with no barriers to arrest its sweep.

Ominous symptoms already appear. Almost all the churches are troubled with heterodoxy and are trying clergymen for heresy. Quite as significant seems the growing tendency of the pulpit to concern itself less with religious dogma and more with the estate of man in his present world. It is needless to say what voices of unbelief outside the churches are heard and how high are the intellectual quarters from which they come. Christian ethics still in part retain their hold. So does the Church as a social centre and a reputed safeguard of social order. But faith in the dogmatic creed and the history is waxing faint. Ritualism itself seems to betray the need of a new stimulus and to be in some measure an æsthetic substitute for spiritual religion.

Dogmatic religion may be said to have received a fatal wound three centuries ago, when the Ptolemaic system was succeeded by the Copernican, and the real relation of the earth

to the universe was disclosed. Dogmatic religion is geocentric. It assumes that our earth is the centre of the universe, the primary object of divine care, and the grand theatre of divine administration. The tendency was carried to the height of travesty when an insanely ultramontane party at Rome meditated, as, if we may believe Dr. Pusey, it did, the declaration of a hypostatic union of the Pope and the Holy Ghost.

The effect of the blow dealt by Copernicus was long suspended, but it is fully felt now that the kingdom of science is come, and the bearings of scientific discovery are generally known. When daylight gives place to starlight we are transported from the earth to the universe, and to the thoughts which the contemplation of the universe begets. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" is the question that then arises in our minds. Is it possible that so much importance as the creeds imply can attach to this tiny planet and to the little drama of humanity? We might be half inclined to think that man has taken himself too seriously and that in the humorous part of

our nature, overlooked by philosophy, is to be found the key to his mystery. The feeling is enhanced when we consider that we have no reason for believing that the evidence of our senses is exhaustive, however much Science, with her telescopes, microscopes, and spectroscopes, may extend their range. We cannot tell that we are not like the sightless denizens of the Mammoth Cave, unconsciously living in the midst of wonders and glories beyond our ken.

Nor has the natural theology of the old school suffered from free criticism much less than revelation. Optimism of the orthodox kind seems no longer possible. Christianity itself, indeed, is not optimistic. It represents the earth as cursed for man's sake, ascribing the curse to primeval sin, and the prevalence of evil in the moral world as not only great but permanent, since those who enter the gate of eternal death are many, while those who enter the gate of eternal life are few. Natural theology of the optimistic school and popular religion have thus been at variance with each other. The old argument from design is now met with the answer that we have nothing

with which to compare this world, and therefore cannot tell whether it was possible for it to be other than it is. Mingled with the signs of order, science discloses apparent signs of disorder, miscarriage, failure, wreck, and waste. Our satellite, so far as we can see, is either a miscarriage or a wreck. Natural selection by a struggle for existence, protracted through countless ages, with the painful extinction of the weaker members of the race, and even of whole races, is hardly the course which benevolence, such as we conceive it, combined with omnipotence, would be expected to take. If in the case of men, suffering is discipline, though this can hardly be said when infants die or myriads are indiscriminately swept off by plague, in the case of animals, which are incapable of discipline and have no future life, it can be nothing but suffering; and it often amounts to torture. The evil passions of men, with all the miseries and horrors which they have produced, are a part of human nature, which itself is a part of creation. Through the better parts of human nature and what there

is of order, beneficence, majesty, tenderness, and beauty in the universe, a spirit is felt appealing to ours, and a promise seems to be conveyed. But if omnipotence and benevolence are to meet, it must apparently be at a point at present beyond our ken. These are the perplexities which obtrude themselves on a scientific age.

What is man? Whence comes he? Whither goes he? In the hands of what power is he? What are the character and designs of that power? These are questions which, now directly presented to us, are of such overwhelming magnitude that we almost wonder at the zeal and heat which other questions, such as party politics, continue to excite. The interest felt in them, however, is daily deepening, and an attentive audience is assured to any one who comes forward with a solution, however crude, of the mystery of existence. Attentive audiences have gathered round Mr. Kidd, Mr. Drummond, and Mr. Balfour, each of whom has a theory to propound. Mr. Kidd's work has had special vogue, and the compliments which its author pays to Pro-

fessor Weismann have been reciprocated by that luminary of science.

Mr. Drummond undertakes to reconcile, and more than reconcile, our natural theology and our moral instincts to the law of evolution. His title, *The Ascent of Man*, is not new; probably it has been used by more than one writer before; nor is he the first to point out that the humble origin of the human species, instead of dejecting, ought to encourage us, since the being who has risen from an ape to Socrates and Newton may hope to rise still higher in the future, if not by further physical development, which physiology seems to bar by pronouncing the brain unsusceptible of further organic improvement, yet by intellectual and moral effort. Mr. Drummond treats his subject with great brilliancy of style and adorns it with very interesting illustrations. Not less firmly than Voltaire's optimist persuaded himself that this was the best of all possible worlds, he has persuaded himself that evolution was the only right method of creation. He ultimately identifies it with love. The cruelties

incidental to it he palliates with a complacency which sometimes provokes a smile. All of them seem to him comparatively of little account, inasmuch as the struggle for existence was to lead up to the struggle for the existence of others, in other words, to the production of maternity and paternity, with the altruism, as he terms it, or, as we have hitherto termed it, the affection, attendant on those relations. To reconcile us to the sufferings of the vanquished in the struggle he dilates on "the keenness of its energies, the splendour of its stimulus, its bracing effect on character, its wholesome lessons throughout the whole range of character." "Without the vigorous weeding of the imperfect," he says, "the progress of the world would not have been possible." Pleasant reading this for "the imperfect"!

"If fit and unfit indiscriminately had been allowed to live and reproduce their kind, every improvement which any individual might acquire would be degraded to the common level in the course of a few generations. Progress can only start by one or two individuals shooting ahead of their species; and their life-gain can only be conserved by their being shut off from their species —

or by their species being shut off from them. Unless shut off from their species their acquisition will either be neutralized in the course of time by the swamping effect of inter-breeding with the common herd, or so diluted as to involve no real advance. The only chance for evolution, then, is either to carry off these improved editions into 'physiological isolation,' or to remove the unimproved editions by wholesale death. The first of these two alternatives is only occasionally possible; the second always. Hence the death of the unevolved, or of the unadapted in reference to some new and higher relation with environment, is essential to the perpetuation of a useful variation."

This reasoning, with much more to the same effect, is plainly a limitation of omnipotence. It supposes that the ruling power of the universe could attain the end only at the expense of wholesale carnage and suffering, facts which cannot be glozed over, and which, as the weakness was not the fault of the weak, but of their Maker, are in apparently irreconcilable conflict with our human notions of benevolence and justice.

This, however, is not all. We might, comparatively speaking, be reconciled to Mr. Drummond's plan of creation if all the carnage and suffering could be shown to be necessary or

even conducive to the great end of giving birth to humanity and love. But Mr. Drummond himself has to admit that natural selection by no means invariably works in the direction of progress ; that in the case of parasites its result has been almost utter degradation. The phenomena of parasites and entozoa, with the needless torments which they inflict, appear irreconcilable with any optimistic theory of the direction of suffering and destruction to a paramount and compensating end. Not only so, but all the extinct races except those which are in the line leading up to man and may be numbered among his progenitors, must apparently, upon Mr. Drummond's hypothesis, have suffered and perished in vain. That "a price, a price in pain, and assuredly sometimes a very terrible price," has been paid for the evolution of the world, after all is said, Mr. Drummond admits to be certain. But he holds it indisputable that even at the highest estimate the thing bought with that price was none too dear, inasmuch as it was nothing less than the present progress of the world. So he thinks we "may safely leave Nature to look after her own ethic."

Probably we might if all the pain was part of the price. But we are distinctly told that it was not; so that there is much of it in which, with our present lights or any that Mr. Drummond is able to afford us, men can hardly help thinking that they see the ruthless operation of blind chance. Nature, being a mere abstraction, has no ethic to look after; nor has Evolution, which is not a power, but a method, though it is personified, we might almost say deified, by its exponent. But if there is not some higher authority which looks after ethic, what becomes of the ethic of man? The most inhuman of vivisectors, if he could show that his practice really led, or was at all likely to lead, to knowledge, would have a better plea than, in the case of suffering and destruction which have led to nothing, the philosophy of evolution can by itself put in for the Author of our being.

Mr. Drummond's treatise, like those of other evolutionists, at least of the optimistic school, assumes the paramount value of the type, and the rightfulness of sacrificing individuals without limit to its perfection and preservation. But this assumption surely requires to be made

good, both to our intellects and to our hearts. The ultimate perfection and preservation of the type cannot, so far as we see, indemnify the individuals who have perished miserably in the preliminary stages. Far from having an individual interest in the evolution of the type, the sufferers of the ages before Darwin had not even the clear idea of a type for their consolation. Besides, what is the probable destiny of the type itself? Science appears to tell us pretty confidently that the days of our planet, however many they may be, are numbered, and that it is doomed at last to fall back into primeval chaos, with all the types which it may contain.

Evolutionists, in their enthusiasm for the species, are apt to bestow little thought on the sentient members of which it consists. "Man" is a mere generalization. This they forget, and speak as if all men personally shared the crown of the final heirs of human civilization. The following passage is an instance : —

"Science is charged, be it once more recalled, with numbering Man among the beasts, and levelling his body with the dust. But he who reads for himself the history of creation as it is written by the hand of Evolution will

be overwhelmed by the glory and honour heaped upon this creature. To be a Man, and to have no conceivable successor; to be the fruit and crown of the long-past eternity, and the highest possible fruit and crown; to be the last victor among the decimated phalanxes of earlier existences, and to be nevermore defeated; to be the best that Nature in her strength and opulence can produce; to be the first of the new order of beings who, by their dominion over the lower world and their equipment for a higher, reveal that they are made in the Image of God — to be this is to be elevated to a rank in Nature more exalted than any philosophy or any poetry or any theology has ever given to man. Man was always told that his place was high; the reason for it he never knew till now; he never knew that his title deeds were the very laws of Nature, that he alone was the Alpha and Omega of Creation, the beginning and the end of Matter, the final goal of Life."

To be the last victor among the decimated phalanxes of earlier existences, and to be nevermore defeated, is, to say the least, a different sort of satisfaction from the glorious triumph of love in which the process of Evolution, according to Mr. Drummond, ends, and in virtue of which he proclaims that Evolution is nothing but the Involution of love, the revelation of Infinite Spirit, the Eternal Life returning to itself. It even reminds us a little

of the unamiable belief that in the next world the sight of the wicked in torment will be a part of the enjoyment of the righteous. Perhaps there is also a touch of lingering geocentricism in this rapturous exaltation of Man. Evolution can give us no assurance that there are not in other planets creatures no less superior to man than he is to the lower tribes upon this earth.

The crown of evolution in Mr. Drummond's system is the evolution of a mother, accompanied by that of a father, which, however, appears to be inferior in degree. The chapters on this subject are more than philosophy ; they are poetry, soaring almost into rhapsody. "The goal," Mr. Drummond says, "of the whole plant and animal kingdoms seems to have been the creation of a family which the very naturalist has to call mammals." The following passage is the climax : —

"But by far the most vital point remains. For we have next to observe how this bears directly on the theme we set out to explore — the Evolution of Love. The passage from mere Otherism, in the physiological sense, to Altruism, in the moral sense, occurs in connection with

the due performance of her natural task by her to whom the Struggle for the Life of Others is assigned. That task, translated into one great word, is Maternity—which is nothing but the Struggle for the Life of Others transfigured to the moral sphere. Focussed in a single human being, this function, as we rise in history, slowly begins to be accompanied by those heaven-born psychical states which transform the femaleness of the older order into the Motherhood of the new. When one follows Maternity out of the depths of lower Nature, and beholds it ripening in quality as it reaches the human sphere, its character, and the character of the processes by which it is evolved, appear in their full divinity. For of what is maternity the mother? Of children? No; for these are the mere vehicle of its spiritual manifestation. Of affection between female and male? No; for that, contrary to accepted beliefs, has little to do in the first instance with sex-relations. Of what then? Of Love itself, of Love as Love, of Love as Life, of Love as Humanity, of Love as the pure and undefiled fountain of all that is eternal in the world. In the long stillness which follows the crisis of Maternity, witnessed only by the new and helpless life which is at once the last expression of the older function and the unconscious vehicle of the new, Humanity is born."

The father seems to be here shut out from the apotheosis; though why, except from a sort of philosophic gallantry, it is difficult to discern. The man who toils from morning till

night to support wife and child surely has not less to do with it than the woman who feeds the child from her breast.

Somewhat paradoxical as it may seem, Mr. Drummond maintains that love did not come from lovers. It was not they that bestowed this gift upon the world. It was the first child, "till whose appearance man's affection was non-existent, woman's was frozen; and man did not love the woman, and woman did not love the man." Apparently, then, in a childless couple there can be no love. Here, according to Mr. Drummond, is the birth of Altruism, for which all creation has travailed from the beginning of time. This appears to him a satisfactory solution of the problem of existence. Yet the races which have been sacrificed to the production of altruism, if they were critical and could find a voice, might ask if there was anything totally unselfish in the indulgence of the sexual passion, which after all plays its part in the matter, and of which the birth of a child is the unavoidable, not perhaps always the welcome, consequence. To the mother the child is necessary for a time

in order to relieve her of a physical secretion, while it repays her care by its endearments, the enjoyment of which is altruistic only on the irrational hypothesis that affection and domesticity are not parts of self. To both parents, in the primitive state at all events, children are necessary as the support and protection of old age. Beautiful and touching parental affection is; pure altruism it is not. Very admirable, as a part of man's estate, it is; but we can hardly accept its appearance as a sufficient justification of all that has been suffered in the process of evolution or as a solution of the mystery of existence. It is curious that Mr. Drummond should place the happiest scene of female development and all that depends on it in the country where divorces are most common and the increase of their number is most rapid. He may have noted, too, that in that same country and among the most highly civilized races families are proportionately small and fewer women become mothers.

Then, put the mammalia as high as we will in the scale of being, they are mortal. Evo-

lution tells us complacently that death is necessary to the progress of the species. It may be so; but what is that to the individual? The more intense and exalted affection, whether conjugal or parental, is, the more heartrending is the thought of the parting which any day and any one of a thousand accidents may bring, while it is sure to come after a few years. Pleasure and happiness are different things. Pleasure may be enjoyed for the moment without any thought of the future. The condemned criminal may enjoy it, and, it seems, does not uncommonly enjoy it in eating his last meal. But happiness appears to be hardly possible without a sense of security, much less with annihilation always in sight. The oracle to which we are listening has told us nothing about a life beyond the present. It is needless to say how much the character of that question has been altered since the corporeal origin and relations of our mental faculties, and of what theology calls the soul, have been apparently disclosed by science. The thought of conscious existence without end is one which

makes the mind, as it were, ache, and under which imagination reels; yet the thought of annihilation is not welcome, nor have we up to this time distinctly faced it. If ever it should be distinctly faced by us, its influence on life and action can hardly fail to be felt. Is the evolutionary optimist himself content to believe that nothing will survive the wreck, inevitable, if science is to be trusted, of this world?

To say that a particular solution of a difficulty is incomplete is not to say that the difficulty is insoluble or even to pronounce the particular solution worthless. Mr. Drummond's solution may be incomplete, and yet it may have value. The only moral excellence of which we have any experience or can form a distinct idea, is that produced by moral effort. If we try to form an idea of moral excellence unproduced by effort, the only result is seraphic insipidity. This may seem to afford a glimpse of possible reconciliation between evolution and our moral instincts. If upward struggle towards perfection, rather than perfection created by fiat,

is the law of the universe, we may see in it, at all events, something analogous to the law of our moral nature.

Mr. Kidd's theory is that man owes his progress to his having acted against his reason in obedience to a supernatural and extra-rational sanction of action which is identified with religion. The interest of the individual and that of society, Mr. Kidd holds to be radically opposed to each other. Reason bids the individual prefer his own interest. The supernatural and extra-rational sanction bids him prefer the interest of society, which is assumed to be paramount, and thus civilization advances. The practical conclusion is that the churches are the greatest instruments of human progress.

What does Mr. Kidd mean by reason? He appears to regard it as a special organ or faculty, capable of being contradicted by another faculty, as one sense sometimes for a moment contradicts another sense, or as our senses are corrected by our intelligence in the case of the apparent motion of the sun. But our reason comprises all the mental ante-

cedents of action. It is the man's intellectual self. To be misled by it when weak or perverted is possible; to act consciously against it is not. Simeon Stylites obeys it as well as Sardanapalus or Jay Gould. He believes, however absurdly, that the Deity accepts the sacrifice of self-torture, and that it will be well for the self-torturer in the sum of things. His self-torture is therefore in accordance with his individual reason, though it is far enough from being in accordance with reason in the abstract. A supernatural sanction, supposing its reality to be proved, becomes a part of the *data* on which reason acts, or rather it becomes, for the occasion, the sole *datum;* and to obey it, instead of being unreasonable, is the most reasonable thing in the world. Misled by his reason, we repeat, to any extent a man may be, both in matters speculative and practical; but he can no more think or act outside of his reason, that is, the entirety of his impressions and inducements, than he can jump out of his skin. What Mr. Kidd seems at bottom to mean is that we may and do, with the best results, prefer social to individual, and moral to

material, objects. But this is a totally different thing from acting against reason, and while it requires a certain elevation of character, it requires no extra-rational motive.

Mr. Kidd speaks of "reason" and the capacity for acting with his fellows in society as "two new forces which made their advent with man." He cannot mean, what his words might be taken to imply, that the rudiments of reason are not discernible in brutes, or that sociability does not prevail in the herd, the swarm, and the hive. To the herd, the swarm, and the hive sacrifices of the individual animal or insect are made like those of the individual man to his community. Is there supernatural or extra-rational sanction in the case of the deer, the ant, or the bee?

Altruism, acting against reason with a supernatural and extra-rational sanction, is, according to Mr. Kidd, the motive power of progress. But this altruism of which we hear so much, what is it? Man is not only a self-regardant, but a sympathetic, domestic, and social being. He is so by nature, just as he is a biped or a mammal. How he became so the physiologist

and psychologist must be left to explain. But a sympathetic, domestic, and social being he is, and in gratifying his sympathetic, domestic, or social propensities, he is no more altruistic, if altruism means disregard of self, than he is when he gratifies his desire of food or motion. Self is not disregarded, because self is sympathetic, domestic, and social. The man of feeling identifies himself with his kind; the father with his children; the patriot with his state; and they all look in various forms for a return of their affection or devotion. The man in each of the cases goes out of his narrower self, but he does not go out of self. Show us the altruist who gives up his dinner to benefit the inhabitants of the planet Mars, and we will admit the existence of altruism in the sense in which the term seems to be used by Mr. Kidd and some other philosophers of to-day.

Reason, as defined by Mr. Kidd, appears to be a faculty which tells us what is desirable, but does not tell us what is possible. "The lower classes of our population," he says, "have no sanction from reason for maintaining existing conditions." "They should in self-interest

put an immediate end to existing social conditions." Why, so they would if they had the power, supposing their condition and the causes of it to be what Mr. Kidd represents. It is not altruism that prevents them, but necessity; the same necessity which constrains people of all classes to submit to evils of various kinds, submission to which, if unnecessary, would be idiotic. That poverty and calamity have been endured more patiently in the hope of a compensation hereafter is true, but makes no difference as to the reasonableness of the endurance. From a comparison of the two sentences just quoted, it would appear that Mr. Kidd identifies reason with self-interest, and, therefore, with something antagonistic to society. Whereas, in a sociable being, conformity to the laws of society is reason. "The interests of the social organism and of the individual," says Mr. Kidd, "are and must remain antagonistic." Why so in the case of a man any more than in that of a bee?

What is the "supernatural and extra-rational sanction" in virtue of which man acts against the dictates of his reason, and by so acting makes progress? Religion. What is religion?

"A religion is a form of belief providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic, and by which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the evolution which the race is undergoing."

Here is a definition of religion without mention of God. The supernatural sanction is religion, and religion is a supernatural sanction. This surely does not give us much new light. But we are further told that "there can never be such a thing as a rational religion." Superstition, such as the worship of Moloch, that of Apis, that of the Gods of Mexico, or mediæval religion in its debased form, is not rational, nor will our calling it supernatural or extra-rational make it an influence above nature and reason, or prove it to have been the motive power of progress, which, on the contrary, it has retarded and sometimes, as in the case of Egypt, killed outright. But religions which in their day have been instruments of progress, and among which may perhaps be numbered, at a grade lower than Christianity, Mohammedanism and Buddhism, have owed their

character to their rational adaptation to human nature and their consecration of rational effort. They are counterparts, not of the polytheistic state religion of Greece, but of the Socratic philosophy, which had a divinity of its own, the impersonation of its morality, and paid homage to the state polytheism only by sacrificing a cock to Æsculapius. Christianity, as it came from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth, was, like the philosophy of Socrates, unliturgical and unsacerdotal; its liturgy was one simple prayer. "Supernatural" is a convenient word, but it by implication begs the question, and when applied to superstitions is most fallacious. "Infranatural," or something implying degradation and grossness, not elevation above the world of sense, would be the right expression. Christian ethics, as distinguished from dogma, are not supernatural; they are drawn from, and adapted to, human nature.

It is disappointing to find that a theorist who makes everything depend on the influence of religion should not have attempted to ascertain precisely what religion is and what is its origin, or to distinguish from each other

the widely diverse phenomena which bear the name. His sanction itself calls for a sanction and calls in vain.

When a hypothesis will not bear inspection in itself, time is wasted in applying it, or testing its applications, to history. But Mr. Kidd says of the first fourteen centuries after Christ:

"So far, fourteen centuries of the history of our civilization had been devoted to the growth and development of a stupendous system of other-worldliness. The conflict against reason had been successful to a degree never before equalled in the history of the world. The super-rational sanction of conduct had attained a strength and universality unknown in the Roman and Greek civilizations. The State was a divine institution. The ruler held his place by divine right, and every political office and all subsidiary power issued from him in virtue of the same authority. Every consideration of the present was over-shadowed in men's minds by conceptions of a future life, and the whole social and political system and the individual lives of men had become profoundly tinged with the prevailing ideas."

Of all the actions by which mediæval civilization was moulded and advanced, what percentage does Mr. Kidd suppose to have been performed under religious influence or from a spiritual motive? How many feudal

kings and lords — how many, even, of the ecclesiastical statesmen of the Middle Ages — does he suppose to have been carrying on a conflict with reason for objects other than worldly and under the inspiration of divine right? How much resemblance to the character of the Author of Christianity would he have found among the rulers and the active spirits of the community or even of the Church? How much among the occupants of the Papal throne itself?

Other critics have pointed out that Mr. Kidd, to say the least, overstates his case in saying that Christianity was directly opposed by all the intellectual forces of the time. So close was the affinity of Roman Stoicism to it that one eminent French writer has undertaken to demonstrate the influence of Christianity on the writings of the Roman Stoics. It had intellectual champions as soon as it had intellectual assailants, and their arguments were addressed to reason. The pessimistic melancholy of a falling empire and the revolt from a decrepit polytheism were also intellectual or partly intellectual forces on its side.

In the recent concessions of political power by the upper classes to the masses, Mr. Kidd finds an example of altruism prevailing over reason. That something has in the course of this revolution occasionally prevailed over reason might be very plausibly maintained. Whether it was anything supernatural or extra-rational seems very doubtful. In Great Britain, for instance, the extension of the franchise in 1832 was the result of a conflict between classes and parties carried on in a spirit as far as possible from altruistic and pushed to the very verge of civil war. Afterwards, the Whig leader, finding himself politically becalmed, brought in a new Reform Bill to raise the wind, and was outbid by Derby and Disraeli, whose avowed object was to "dish the Whigs." Of altruistic self-sacrifice it would be difficult in the whole process to find much trace.

If this branch of the inquiry were to be pursued, it might be worth while for Mr. Kidd to consider the case of Japan, the progress of which of late has been so marvellously rapid. It appears that in Japan, while the lower

classes have a superstition at once very gross and very feeble, the upper classes, by whom the movement has been initiated and carried forward, have no genuine religion, but at most official forms, such as could not sustain action against self-interest.

The cause of human progress has been the desire of man to improve his condition, ever mounting as, with the success of his efforts, fresh possibilities of improvement were brought within his view. It is in this respect he specially differs from the brutes. Mechanical evolution and selection by mere struggle for existence apply to man in his rudimentary state or in his character as an animal. Of humanity, desire of improvement is the motive power. There is no need, therefore, of importing the language, fast becoming a jargon, of evolution into our general treatment of history. Bees, ants, and beavers are marvels of nature in their way. But they show no desire for improvement, and make no effort to improve. Man alone aspires. The aspiration is weak in the lower races of men, strong in the higher. Of its existence and of the different degrees

in which it exists, science may be able to give an account. But it certainly is not the offspring of unreason, nor can it be aided in any way by superstition or by any rejection of truth.

A work on the foundations of religious belief by the leader of a party in the British House of Commons, who is by some marked out as a future Prime Minister, shows, like the theological and cosmogonical essays of Mr. Gladstone, the increasing interest felt about these problems, not only by divines and philosophers, but by men of the world. In Mr. Balfour's case the union of speculation with politics is the more striking, inasmuch as his work is one of abstruse philosophy. It is by metaphysical arguments that he undertakes to overthrow systems opposed to religion, and to rebuild the dilapidated edifice on new and surer foundations. He is thus treading in the steps of Coleridge, the great religious philosopher of the English Church. It is to a limited circle of readers that he appeals. Ordinary minds find metaphysics "out of their welkin," to use the words of the Clown

in *Twelfth Night*. They venerate from afar a study which has engaged and still engages the attention of powerful intellects. But they are themselves lost in the region in which "transcendental solipsism" has its home. They are unable to see at what definitive conclusions, still more, at what practical conclusions, such as might influence conduct, philosophy has arrived. Metaphysic seems to them to be in a perpetual state of flux. "The theories of the great metaphysicians of the past," Mr. Balfour says, "are no concern of ours." They would surely concern us, however, if, like successive schools of science, they had made some real discoveries and left something substantial behind them. But as Mr. Balfour plaintively tells us, the system of Plato, notwithstanding the beauty of its literary vesture, has no effectual vitality; our debts to Aristotle, though immense, "do not include a tenable theory of the universe"; in the Stoic metaphysics "nobody takes any interest." The Neo-Platonists were mystics, and in mysticism Mr. Balfour recognizes an undying element of human thought, but "nobody is concerned about

their hierarchy of beings connecting through infinite gradations the Absolute at one end of the scale with matter at the other." The metaphysics of Descartes "are not more living than his physics"; neither "his two substances, nor the single substance of Spinoza, nor the innumerable substances of Leibnitz satisfy the searcher after truth." Had these several systems been investigations of matters in which real discovery was possible, each of them surely would have discovered something, and a certain interest in each of them would remain. But they have flitted like a series of dreams, or a succession of kaleidoscopic variations. Mr. Balfour doubts "whether any metaphysical philosopher before Kant can be said to have made contributions to this subject [a theory of nature] which at the present day need to be taken into serious account," and he presently proceeds to indicate that "Kant's doctrines, even as modified by his successors, do not provide a sound basis for an epistemology of nature." Mr. Balfour seems even to think that philosophy is in some degree a matter of national temperament. He

says that the philosophy of Kant and other German philosophers will never be thoroughly received so as to form standards of reference in any English-speaking community "until the ideas of these speculative giants are thoroughly re-thought by Englishmen and reproduced in a shape which ordinary Englishmen will consent to assimilate." "Under ordinary conditions," he says, "philosophy cannot, like science, become international." This seems as much as saying that philosophy is still not a department of science, or a real investigation resulting in truths evident to all the world alike, but a mode of looking at things which may vary with national peculiarities of mind and character.

Locke, as Mr. Balfour reminds us, toward the end of his great work assures his readers that he "suspects that natural philosophy is not capable of being made science," and serenely draws from his admissions the moral that "as we are so little fitted to frame theories about this present world we had better devote our energies to preparing for the next." Perhaps we might amend the suggestion by

saying that most of us had better devote our energies to the search for attainable truth and to the improvement of our character and estate in this world as a preparation for the world to come. A man so metaphysical in his cast as Emerson is obliged to say that we know nothing of nature or of ourselves, and that man has not "taken one step towards the solution of the problem of his destiny."

Before the relation of mind and body had been proved, and while the mind was supposed to have a divine origin of its own and to be a sojourner in the body as a temporary home or prison-house, it was perhaps easier to believe, as did the mediæval philosophers, that in the mind there was a source of knowledge about the universe apart from the perceptions of sense, and that the world might be studied, not by observation, but by introspection, and even through the analysis of language as the embodiment of ideas. Transcendental Solipsism and a world constructed out of categories, would, under those conditions, have their day. Something of the mediæval disposition seems to lurk in the effort to demonstrate

that the material world has no existence apart from our perceptions. Be this true or not, it can make little difference in our theological or spiritual position. The fact must be the same in the case of a dog as in the case of a man.

Most of us, therefore, will be content to look on while Mr. Balfour's metaphysical blade, flashing to the right and left, disposes of "Naturalism" on the one hand and of Transcendentalism on the other. We have only to put in a gentle *caveat* against any idea of driving the world back through general scepticism to faith. Scepticism, not only general, but universal, is more likely to be the ultimate result, and any faith which is not spontaneous, whether it be begotten of ecclesiastical pressure or intellectual despair, is, and in the end will show itself to be, merely veiled unbelief. The catastrophe of Dean Mansel, who, while he was trying in the interest of orthodoxy, to cut the ground from under the feet of the Rationalist, himself inadvertently demonstrated the impossibility of believing in God, was an awful warning to the polemical tactician.

Mr. Balfour gets on more practical ground and comes more within the range of general interest when he proceeds to set up authority apart from reason as a foundation of theological belief. Above reason, authority must apparently be, if it is apart from it, for wherever authority has established itself, reason must give way, while it has no means of constraining the submission of authority. No one could be less inclined to presumptuous rationalism than Butler, who, in his work, which though in partial ruin is still great, with noble frankness accepts reason as our only guide to truth. In combating the objections against the evidences of Christianity, Butler says that "he expresses himself with caution lest he should be mistaken to vilify reason, which is indeed the only faculty we have to judge concerning anything, even revelation." What is deference to authority but the deference to superior knowledge or wisdom which reason pays, and which, if its grounds, intellectual or moral, fail or become doubtful, reason will withdraw? This is just as true with regard to the authority of tradition as with regard

to that of a living informant or adviser; just as true with regard to the authority of a Church as with regard to that of an individual teacher or guide. Authority, Mr. Balfour says, as the term is used by him, "is in all cases contrasted with reason and stands for that group of non-rational causes, moral, social, and educational, which produces its results by psychic processes other than reason." A writer may affix to a term any sense he pleases for his personal convenience; but the reasoning of the psychic process of deference to authority, though undeveloped, and, perhaps, till it is challenged, unconscious, whether its cause be moral, social, or educational, is capable of being presented in a rational form, and cannot, therefore, be rightly called non-rational. There is, of course, a sort of authority, so styled, which impresses itself by means other than rational, such as religious persecution, priestly thaumaturgy, spiritual terrorism, or social tyranny. But in this Mr. Balfour would not recognize a source of truth or foundation of theological belief. A philosopher who proposes to rebuild theology,

wholly or in part, on the basis of authority, seems bound to provide us with some analysis of authority itself, and some test by which genuine authority may be distinguished from ancient and venerable imposture. Papal infallibility, which Mr. Balfour cites as an instance, does undoubtedly postulate the submission of reason to authority; but it proved the necessity of that submission by the extermination of the Albigenses and the holocausts of the Inquisition. It is still ready, as its Encyclical and Syllabus intimate, to sustain the demonstration by the help of the secular arm.

So in the case of habit. Our common actions have no doubt become by use automatic, as our common beliefs are accepted without investigation. But if they are challenged, reasons for them can be given. A man eats without thinking, but if he is called upon, he can give a good reason for taking food. A soldier obeys the word of command mechanically, but if he were called upon, he could give a good reason for his obedience.

Mr. Balfour scarcely lets us see distinctly

what is his view of belief in miracles, which must play an important part in any reconstruction or review of the basis of theology; an all-important part, indeed, if Paley was right in saying, as he did in reply to Hume, that there was no way other than miracle by which God could be revealed. He seems inclined to represent the objections to them as philosophical rather than historical, and such as a sounder philosophy may dissipate, intimating that rationalists have approached the inquiry with a predetermination "to force the testimony of existing records into conformity with theories on the truth or falsity of which it is for philosophy not history to pronounce." This might be said with some justice of Strauss's first *Life of Jesus*, and perhaps of some other German philosophies of the Gospel history. But the current objections to miracles, with which a theologian has to deal, are clearly of a historical kind. A miracle is an argument addressed through the sense to the understanding, which pronounces that the thing done is supernatural and proof of the intervention of a higher power. It seems inconceivable, if the salvation of the

world were to depend on belief in miracles, that Providence should have failed to provide records, for the assurance of those who were not eye-witnesses, equal in certainty to the evidence afforded eye-witnesses by sense. Are the records of the miracles which we possess unquestionably authentic and contemporaneous? Were the reporters beyond all suspicion, not only of deceit, but of innocent self-delusion? Were they, looking to the circumstances of their time and their education, likely to be duly critical in their examination of the case? Is there anything in the internal character of the miracles themselves, the demoniac miracles for example, to move suspicion, it being impossible to think that Providence would allow indispensable evidences of vital truth to be stamped with the marks of falsehood? What is the weight of the adverse evidence derived from the silence of external history and the apparent absence of the impression which might have been expected to be made by prodigies such as miraculous darkness and the rising of the dead out of their graves? These questions, daily pressed upon us by scepticism, are strictly

historical, and will have to be treated by restorers of theological belief on strictly historical grounds.

Mr. Balfour recognizes mysticism as an "undying element in human thought." That it is not yet dead is evident. Minds not a few have taken refuge in various forms of it. But undying it surely is not. The mystic, however exalted, merely imposes on himself. He creates by a subtle sophistication of his own mind the cloudy object of his faith and worship. He has himself written his Book of Mormon, and hidden it where he finds it. In that direction there can be no hope of laying the foundation of a new theological belief.

There can be no hope, apparently, of laying new foundations for a rational theology in any direction excepting that of the study of the universe and of humanity as manifestations of the supreme power in that spirit of thoroughgoing intellectual honesty of which Huxley, who has just been taken from us, is truly said to have been an illustrious example. That we are made and intended to pursue knowledge is as certain as that we are made and intended to

strive for the improvement of our estate, and we cannot tell how far or to what revelations the pursuit may lead us. If Revelation is lost, Manifestation remains, and great manifestations appear to be opening on our view. Agnosticism is right, if it is a counsel of honesty, but ought not to be heard if it is a counsel of despair.

THE CHURCH AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

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At the English Church Congress held in 1895 at Norwich, Professor Bonney, Canon of Manchester, made a bold and honourable attempt to cast a millstone off the neck of Christianity by frankly renouncing belief in the historical character of the earlier books of the Bible.

"I cannot deny," he said, "that the increase of scientific knowledge has deprived parts of the earlier books of the Bible of the historical value which was generally attributed to them by our forefathers. The story of the creation in Genesis, unless we play fast and loose either with words or with science, cannot be brought into harmony with what we have learned from geology. Its ethnological statements are imperfect, if not sometimes inaccurate. The stories of the flood and of the Tower of Babel

are incredible in their present form. Some historical element may underlie many of the traditions in the first eleven chapters of that book, but this we cannot hope to recover."

With the historical character of the chapters relating to the creation, Canon Bonney must resign his belief in the Fall of Adam ; with his belief in the Fall of Adam he must surrender the doctrine of the Atonement, as connected with that event, and thus relieve conscience of the strain put upon it in struggling to reconcile vicarious punishment with our sense of justice. He will also have to lay aside his belief in the Serpent of the Temptation, and in the primeval personality of Evil.

In *Lux Mundi*, a collection of essays edited by the Reverend Principal of Pusey House, and understood to emanate from the High Church quarter, we find plain indications that the unhistoric character, so frankly recognized by the learned Canon in the opening chapters of Genesis, is recognized in other parts of Old Testament history by High Churchmen, who, having studied recent criticism, feel like the Canon, that there is a millstone to be cast off.

One of these essayists admits that the "battle of historical record cannot be fought on the field of the Old Testament as it can on that of the New"; that "very little of the early record can be securely traced to a period near the events"; and that "the Church cannot insist upon the historical character of the earliest records of the ancient church in detail as she can on the historical character of the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles." The same writer seems ready to entertain the view that the "books of Chronicles represent a later and less historical version of Israel's history than that given in Samuel and Kings," and that they "represent the version of that history which had become current in the priestly schools." "Conscious perversion" he will not acknowledge, but in the theory of "unconscious idealizing" of history he is willing, apparently, to acquiesce. Inspiration, he thinks, is consistent with this sort of "idealizing," though it excludes conscious deception or pious fraud. Conscious deception or pious fraud no large-minded and instructed critic of primeval records would be inclined to charge. But "ideal" is

apparently only another name for "mythical," and it is difficult to see how myths can in any sense be inspired, or why, if the records are in any sense inspired, the Church should not be able to insist on their historical character. "In detail" is a saving expression; but the details make up the history, and if the truth of the details cannot be guaranteed, what is our guarantee for the truth of the whole? Human testimony, no doubt, may sometimes fail in minor particulars, while in the main account of the matter it is true. But is it conceivable that the Holy Spirit, in dictating the record of God's dealings with mankind for our instruction in the way of life, should simulate the defects of human evidence?

A veil which in all the orthodox Churches hung before the eyes of free inquiry when they were turned on the origin and estate of man is removed by the Canon's renunciations. The present writer, as a student at college, attended the lectures of Dr. Buckland, a pioneer in geology; and he remembers the desperate shifts to which the lecturer was driven in his efforts to reconcile the facts

of his science with the Mosaic cosmogony, the literal truth of which he did not venture to impugn. By a "day" Dr. Buckland said, Moses meant a geological period, though the text says that each day was made up of a morning and an evening, while the Decalogue fixes the sense by enjoining the observance of the seventh day as that on which the Creator rested after the six days' labour of creation. How the professor dealt with fossil records of geological races and the appearance of death in the world before the fall of man, the writer does not now remember. It is not very long since a preacher before an educated audience could meet the objection to the Mosaic deluge arising from the position of stones in the mountains of Auvergne, which such a cataclysm must have swept away, by the simple expedient of affirming that when the deluge was over, the stones had been restored to their places by miracle. Nay, were not Mr. Gladstone's great intellectual powers the other day exerted to prove that the Creator, in dictating to Moses the account of the creation, had come won-

derfully near the scientific truth and almost anticipated the nebular hypothesis?

That the Bible does not teach science apologists are now ready to proclaim. But the fact is that it does teach science, — cosmogonical science at least, — and that its teachings have been disproved.

From the conceptions of science, geocentricism, derived from the Mosaic cosmogony, may have been banished, but over those of theology its cloud still heavily hangs. The consecrated impression has survived the distinct belief, and faith shrinks from the theological revolution which the abandonment of the impression would involve.

Faith takes refuge in the substitution of figurative and symbolical for literal truth. This is Origen over again with his system of allegorical interpretation as a universal solvent of moral difficulties in Scripture. The refuge is surely little better than a subterfuge. The writer of a primeval narrative, unconscious of astronomy, geology, or physiology, believed in the literal truth of his legend. He had no idea of allegory or symbol. When he said

six days of creation, he meant days and not æons. Paradise, the Trees of Life and Knowledge, the intercourse of God in human form with men, the Fall, the longevity of the patriarchs, the Noachic deluge, the miraculous origin of the rainbow, were to him literal facts. If it was from the Holy Spirit that these narratives emanated, how can the Holy Spirit have failed to let mankind know that in reality they were allegories? How could it allow them to be received as literal truths, to mislead the world for ages, to bar the advance of science, and, when science at last prevailed, to discredit revelation by the exposure? Besides, to maintain the symbolical truths of Genesis, is almost as hard as to maintain its literal truth. What symbolical truth is there in the order of creation now disproved by science, or in the description of the cosmic system and the relations of the sun and moon to our planet? What symbolic truth is there in the Fall of Man, and how does it designate the rise of man from the brute, which science shows him originally to have been, to the level of civilized humanity?

The history of every nation begins with myth. A primeval tribe keeps no record, and a nation in its maturity has no more recollection of what happened in its infancy than a man of what happened to him in his cradle. It is needless to say that the first book of Livy is a tissue of fable, though the Romans were great keepers of records and very matter-of-fact as a people. When the age of reflection arrives and the nation begins to speculate on its origin, it gives itself a mythical founder, a Theseus, a Romulus, or an Abraham, and ascribes to him its ancestral institutions or customs. In his history also are found the keys to immemorial names and the origin of mysterious or venerated objects, the Ruminal Fig-tree or the tomb of Abraham. It is a rule of criticism that we cannot by any critical alembic extract materials for history out of fable. If the details of a story are fabulous, so is the whole. If the details of Abraham's story — the appearances of the Deity to him, so strangely anthropomorphic, the miraculous birth of his son when his wife was ninety years old, his adventures with Sarah in Egypt and

afterwards in Gerar, evidently two versions of the same legend, the sacrifice of his son arrested by the angel, with the episode of Lot, the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, and the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt[1] — are plainly unhistorical, the whole story must be relegated to the domain of tribal fancy. We cannot make a real personage out of unrealities or fix a place for him in unrecorded time.

That the alleged record is of a date posterior by many centuries to the events, and therefore no record at all, plainly appears from the mention of Kings of Israel in Genesis (xxxvi. 31). No reason has been shown for supposing that the passage is an interpolation, while the suggestion that it is prophetic is extravagant. It stamps the date of the book, like

[1] In the case of the metamorphosis of Lot's wife, we have the origin of the legend still clearly before us in the pillars or needles of salt, at Usdum, near the southwest corner of the Dead Sea, which sometimes bear a resemblance to the human form. The natural peculiarities of the Dead Sea region are pretty evidently the source of this whole circle of legend. — See Andrew D. White's most interesting work, *The Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, Vol. II., chap. xviii.

the mention of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy, to get rid of which efforts equally desperate are made. The words of Genesis xii. 6, "the Canaanite was then in the land," show that the book was written when the Canaanite had long disappeared, and the words of Deuteronomy xxxiv. 10, "there arose not a prophet in Israel since like unto Moses," imply that the book was written after the rise of a line of other prophets. Moreover the writer always speaks of Moses in the third person. These things were noticed by critics long ago, but the eyes of faith, in England and America at least, have been shut. The canon of Sir George Cornewall Lewis, limiting the trustworthiness of oral tradition to a single century, may be too rigid; but we certainly cannot trust oral tradition for such a period as that between the call of Abraham and the Kings, especially when, the alleged events being miraculous, an extraordinary amount of evidence is necessary to justify belief.

The figure of the patriarch Abraham, a typical sheikh, as well as the father of Israel, is exceptionally vivid, and his history is excep-

tionally dramatic. It is needless to say that the narrative contains episodes of striking beauty, such as the meeting of the steward with Rebekah, the scene of Hagar and her child nearly perishing in the wilderness, and the sacrifice of Isaac. But to regard Abraham as a real founder, not only of a nation, but of the Church, and as the chosen medium of communication between God and man, sound criticism will no longer allow us; and sound criticism, like genuine science, is the voice of the Spirit of Truth. A writer in *Lux Mundi*, already quoted, avows his belief that "the modern development of historical criticism is reaching results as sure, where it is fairly used, as scientific inquiry." He significantly reminds churchmen of the warning conveyed by the name of Galileo. Why should we any longer cling to that which, whatever it may have been to the men of a primeval tribe, is to us a low and narrow conception of the Deity? Why should we force ourselves to believe that a Being who fills eternity and infinity became the guest of a Hebrew sheikh; entered into a covenant with

the sheikh's tribe, to the exclusion of the rest of the human race; and as the seal of the covenant ordained the perpetuation of a barbarous tribal rite? There have been bibliolaters so extreme as to wish even converted Jews to continue the practice to which the promise was mysteriously annexed. Tribalism may attach inordinate value to genealogies as well as to ancestral rites, but can we imagine the Author of the universe limiting his providential regard and his communication of vital truth to his creatures by tribal lines? Every tribe is the chosen people of its own god; enjoys a monopoly of his favour; is upheld by him against the interest of other nations, and especially protected by him in war. It is he who gives it victory, and if stones fall or are hurled on the enemy retreating through a rocky pass, it is he who casts them down (Joshua x. 11). Christianity is the denial of Jewish tribalism, proclaiming that all nations have been made of one blood to dwell together on the earth, and are sharers alike in the care of Providence. Of the bad effects of a conception of God drawn from the

imagination of Jewish tribalism, the least is the waste of money and effort in desperate attempts to convert the Jews.

Of the history of the other patriarchs the texture is apparently the same as that of the history of Abraham. They are mythical fathers of a race, a character which extends to Ishmael and Esau. In fact the chapters relating to them are full of what, in an ordinary case, would be called ethnological myth. Of contemporary or anything like contemporary record, even supposing the Pentateuch to have been written by Moses, there can be no pretence. It is thus in the absence of anything like evidence that we have been called upon to accept such incidents as the bodily wrestling of Jehovah with Jacob, and the appearance to Jacob in a dream of an angel who is the organ of a supernatural communication about the speckles of the rams or he-goats. Most picturesque and memorable, no doubt, are the characters of Esau, the typical father of the hunter tribe, and of Jacob, in whose unscrupulous and successful cunning we have a picture such as the anti-Semite

would now draw of his enemy, the financial Jew. These chapters are full of legends connected with fanciful interpretations of names, such as Jehovah-Jireh (Genesis xxii. 14); fanciful accounts of immemorial monuments, such as Jacob's pillar; or of tribal customs, such as that of refraining from a particular sinew because it had been touched and made to shrink by Jehovah in wrestling with Jacob. Extraordinary simplicity is surely displayed by the commentators who appeal to the custom as evidence of the historic event.

Much labour has been spent in efforts to identify the Pharaoh of the Exodus and to fix the date of that event and its connection with Egyptian history. Still more labour has been spent in tracing the route of the Israelites through the wilderness and explaining away the tremendous difficulties of the narrative. What if the whole is mythical? There is a famine in Palestine. The patriarch sends his ten sons, each with an ass and a sack, across the desert to buy food in Egypt. Provisions must have been furnished them for their journey, and of what they bought they

must have consumed not a little on their journey home. This seems improbable, nor was it very likely that the ten should strike the exact place where their brother Joseph was in power. Of the poetic character of the story of Joseph, with its miraculous dreams and their interpretations, there surely can be no doubt. Yet upon the story of Joseph and his brethren the whole history of the captivity in Egypt and the Exodus apparently hangs. We might almost renounce the task of analyzing the rest of the narrative—the attempt of the Egyptian rulers to extirpate the Hebrews by the strange command to the midwives when they might have taken a shorter and surer course; the contest in thaumaturgy between the magicians of Jehovah and those of Egypt; the plagues sent upon the helpless people of Egypt to make their ruler do that which Omnipotence might at once have done by its fiat; the extraordinary multiplication of the Hebrews, whose adult males, in spite of the destruction of their male children, amount to six hundred thousand, a number which implies a total

population of more than two millions; their sudden appearance as an armed host though they had just been represented as the unresisting bondsmen of the Egyptians; their wanderings for forty years within the narrow limits of the Sinaitic peninsula, where, though the region is desert, they find food and water not only for themselves but for their innumerable flocks and herds; their construction of a sumptuous tabernacle where materials or artificers for it could not have been found; the plague of fiery serpents which was sent among them and the brazen serpent by looking on which they were healed; the miraculous destruction of the impious opponents of an exclusive priesthood; the giants of Canaan; the victories gained over native tribes by the direct interposition of Heaven; the strange episode of Balaam and his colloquy with his ass; the stopping of the sun and moon that Israel might have time for the pursuit and slaughter of his enemies. This last incident alone seems enough to stamp the legendary character of the whole. In vain we attempt to reduce the miracle,

which would imply a disturbance of the entire solar system, to a mere prolongation of the daylight. The Old Testament is altogether geocentric, and not merely in the phenomenal sense. The sun and moon are made "for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light on the earth," and with them is coupled the creation of the stars. The writer of the book of Joshua cites the book of Jasher as evidence of the miracle. Was the book of Jasher inspired? Could an inspired writer need or rest on the evidence of one who was uninspired?

Whether any sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt or any real connection with that country is denoted by the visit of Abraham to Egypt and afterwards by the story of the Exodus, it is for Egyptologists to determine. Nothing certainly Egyptian seems to be traceable in Hebrew beliefs or institutions. Of the appearance of Hebrew forms on Egyptian monuments, Egyptian conquest would appear to give a sufficient explanation. The history of the Exodus is connected with the account of the institution of the Passover,

and analogy may lead us to surmise that national imagination has been busy in explaining the origin of an immemorial rite.

As to the date and sources of the Pentateuch and the other historical books there is a flux of learned hypothesis. But the questions of what documentary materials a book was composed, and whether it was composed in the reign of Josiah or at the time of the captivity, do not concern us here. It is enough that the book has no pretension to authenticity or to a date within many centuries of the events. Let it be observed that the Church still tenders the Pentateuch to the people as the books of Moses, though a learned churchman will now hardly be found to maintain that Moses was the writer.

We are, then, in no way bound to believe that God so identified himself with a favoured tribe as to license it to invade a number of other tribes which had done it no wrong, to slaughter them and take possession of their land. We are in no way bound to believe that he, by the mouth of Moses, rebuked his chosen people for saving alive the

women and children of the Midianites and bade them kill every male among the little ones and every woman that had known man (Numbers xxxi. 17); or that he commanded them to slay, not only man, woman, and child, but the dumb animals, everything that breathed, in a captured city. To the objections raised by humanity against the slaughter of the Canaanites, Christian apologists have made various and, as one of their number admits, not very consistent replies. While Bishop Butler holds that divine command in itself constituted morality, Mozley, the Butler of our day, holds that the divine command could not constitute morality had not the general morality of the people been on that level. Some say that in conquering Canaan the Israelites did but recover their own, a plea which, even if it had not been ousted by prescription, would be totally inconsistent with the account of the sojourning of Abraham and of his purchase of a plot of land. Others maintain that, having been driven by force from Egypt, they had a right to help themselves to a home where they could find

it, and to put all the existing inhabitants to the sword. The bequest of Noah is also pleaded. But at last the apologist has to fall back upon the simple command of the Almighty, which is justified on the ground that the Canaanites were idolaters, they never having heard of the true God.

Such examples as the slaughter of the Canaanites, the killing of Sisera, the assassination of Eglon, the hewing of Agag in pieces by Samuel before the Lord, Elijah's massacre of the prophets of Baal, the hanging of Haman with his ten sons commemorated in the hideous feast of Purim, have, it is needless to say, had a deplorable effect in forming the harsher and darker parts of the character which calls itself Christian. They are responsible in no small degree for murderous persecutions, and for the extirpation or oppression of heathen races. The dark side of the Puritan character in particular is traceable to their influence. Macaulay mentions a fanatical Scotch Calvinist whose writings, he says, hardly bear a trace of acquaintance with the New Testament. Scotch Cal-

vinism itself has in fact ethically in it not a little of the Old Testament.

Jael, when she decoyed her husband's ally into her tent and slew him while he was resting trustfully beneath it, broke in the most signal manner the sacred rule of Arab hospitality, as well as the ordinary moral law. The comment of orthodoxy upon this is: "If we can overlook the treachery and violence which belong to the age and country, and bear in mind Jael's ardent sympathies with the oppressed people of God, her faith in the right of Israel to possess the land in which they were now slaves, her zeal for the glory of Jehovah as against the gods of Canaan, and the heroic courage and firmness with which she executed her deadly purpose, we shall be ready to yield to her the praise which is her due."[1] The extenuating motives supplied by the commentator are not to be found in the text. To reconcile us to the assassination of Eglon, a distinction is drawn between God's providential order and his moral law, the providential order ordaining what the moral law would forbid.

[1] *The Speaker's Commentary, ad loc.*

Perhaps nothing in the Old Testament is more instinct with fanatical tribalism or more revolting than the praise of Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, who secretes the spies of the robber tribe which is coming to destroy her country, and who, though a traitress, has a place of honour as a heroine in one of the genealogies of Jesus.

The writer heard the other day a very beautiful Christian sermon on the purity of heart in virtue of which good men see God. But the lesson of the day, read before that sermon, was the history of Jehu. Jehu, a usurper, begins by murdering Joram, the son of his master Ahab, king of Israel, and Ahaziah, the king of Judah, neither of whom had done him any wrong. He then has Jezebel, Ahab's widow, killed by her own servants. Next he suborns the guardians and tutors of Ahab's seventy sons in Samaria to murder the children committed to their care and send the seventy heads to him in baskets to be piled at the gate of the city. Then he butchers the brethren of Ahaziah, king of Judah, with whom he falls in on the road,

two and forty in number, for no specified or apparent crime. On his arrival at Samaria there is more butchery. Finally he entraps all the worshippers of Baal, by an invitation to a solemn assembly, and massacres them to a man. At the end of this series of atrocities the Lord is made to say to him, "Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes and hast done unto the house of Ahab all that was in my heart, thy children unto the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." Jehu had undoubtedly done what was in the heart of the Jehovist party and right in its eyes. But between the sensuality of the Baalite and the sanguinary zealotry of the Jehovist it might not have been very easy to choose.

David is loyal, chivalrous, ardent in friendship, and combines with adventurous valour the tenderness which has led to our accepting him as the writer of some of the Psalms. So far, he is an object of our admiration, due allowance for time and circumstance being made. But he is guilty of murder and

adultery, both in the first degree; he puts to death with hideous tortures the people of a captured city; on his death-bed he bequeaths to his son a murderous legacy of vengeance; he exemplifies by his treatment of his ten concubines, whom he shuts up for life, the most cruel evils of polygamy (2 Samuel xx. 3). The man after God's own heart he might be deemed by a primitive priesthood to whose divinity he was always true; but it is hardly possible that he should be so deemed by a moral civilization. Still less possible is it that we should imagine the issues of spiritual life to be so shut up that from this man's loins salvation would be bound to spring.

The books of the Old Testament, and notably the historical books, are for the most part by unknown authors and of unknown dates. That the early part of Genesis is made up of two narratives, the Elohistic, in which the name of God is Elohim, and the Jehovistic, in which the name is Jehovah, all experts are now agreed, and even the unlearned reader may verify the fact. A combination of two narratives is still traceable in

the history of Abraham and his son. That in the account of the creation and the flood, Assyrian legend is the basis on which the Hebrew built a more monotheistic and sublimer story, is the opinion of writers who still deem themselves orthodox and who apparently do not shrink from the hypothesis that the Deity in compiling an account of his own works was fain, as the basis of his narrative, to avail himself of an Assyrian legend. Documentary analysis and the philosophy of history combined have made it highly probable that writings, ascribed by our Bible to Moses, not only were not his, but were of a date as late as the Captivity. It is likely that the schools of the prophets played a great part, as did the monasteries of the Middle Ages, in composing the chronicles of the nation. The pensiveness of the Captivity seems to pervade the Psalms. These, as has been already said, are matters at present of hypothesis, and though most interesting to the learned, little affect the practical question whether the writings ascribed to Moses should continue to be read in churches as authentic and inspired.

That they are not authentic is certain. It is not less certain that by whomsoever, at whatever time, and by whatever process they may have been produced, we are without an assignable reason for supposing them to be inspired.

Nor do the Old Testament writers themselves put forward any claim to inspiration. Where they cite elder authorities, such as the book of Jasher, they in effect declare themselves indebted to human records, and therefore uninspired. Preachers, especially preachers of reform, speak in the name of Heaven. Oriental and primitive preachers speak as the inspired organs of Heaven. The prophets, whose name, with its modern connotation, is scarcely more appropriate than it would be if applied to Savonarola or John Wesley, are in this respect like others of their class. One of them when bidden to prophesy calls for a minstrel, under the influence of whose strains the hand of the Lord comes upon him (2 Kings iii. 15; see also 1 Samuel x. 5). All seers, as their name imports, have visions. Primitive lawgivers speak by divine command. In no

other way, apparently, is inspiration claimed by the authors of the Old Testament.

Jesus came to substitute a religion of conscience for that of law, a religion of humanity for that of a race, worship in spirit and in truth for worship in the temple. His preaching was a reaction against the Judaism then impersonated in the Pharisee, afterwards developed in the Talmud, and now fully represented in the Talmudic Jew. But he was not a revolutionist. Like Socrates, he accepted established institutions, including the national ritual, and in that sense fulfilled all righteousness. Nor was he, on any hypothesis as to his nature, a critic or concerned with any critical objections to the sacred books. Addressing an audience which believed in them, he cited them and appealed to their authority in the usual way. He cites the book of Jonah, and in terms which seem to show that he regards it as a real history; so that a literalist, like the late Dr. Liddon, took fire at being told that the book was an apologue, considering this an impeachment of the veracity of Jesus. Yet few, even of the most orthodox, would now pro-

fess to believe that Jonah sojourned in the belly of a fish. St. Paul in like manner treats the narrative of the fall of Adam in Genesis as historical and connects a doctrine with it, though the mythical character of the narrative is admitted, as we have seen, even by a dignitary of the Church.

The Evangelists, simple-minded, find in the sacred books of their nation prognostications of the character and mission of Jesus. Sometimes, as critical examination shows, a little has been enough to satisfy their uncritical minds (see Matthew ii. 18; xxi. 5). But surely it is something like a platitude to ascribe to them such an idea of Old Testament prophecy as is worked out for us by Keith and other modern divines. No real and specific prediction of the advent of Jesus, or of any event in his life, can be produced from the books of the Old Testament. At most we find passages or phrases which are capable of a spiritual application, and in that metaphorical sense prophetic. Even of the famous passage in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, if it is read without strong prepossessions, no more than this can be said.

Beyond contest and almost beyond compare is the beauty, spiritual as well as lyrical, of some of the Psalms. But there are others which it is shocking to hear a Christian congregation reciting, still more shocking, perhaps, to hear it chanting in a church. To wish that your enemy's wife may be a widow, and that his children may be fatherless and have none to pity them, is oriental. To wish that his prayer may be turned to sin and that Satan may stand at his right hand, to wish in short for his spiritual ruin, is surely oriental and something more. The writer in *Lux Mundi*, already cited, would persuade himself and us that these utterances are not those of personal spite, but "the claim which righteous Israel makes upon God that he should vindicate himself and let her eyes see how righteousness turns again to judgment." This is the way in which we have been led by our traditional belief in the inspiration of the Old Testament to play fast and loose with our understandings and with our moral sense. It might almost as well be pretended, when the Greek

poet Theognis longs to drink the blood of his political enemies, that he is not actuated by hatred, but has some great moral object in his mind.

What is the Old Testament? It is the entire body of Hebrew literature, theology, philosophy, history, fiction, and poetry, including the poetry of love as well as that of religion. We have bound it all up together as a single book, and bound up that book with the New Testament, as though the religion of the two were the same and the slaughter of the Canaanites or the massacre of the day of Purim were a step towards Christian brotherhood and the Sermon on the Mount. We have forcibly turned Hebrew literature into a sort of cryptogram of Christianity. The love-song called the Song of Solomon has been turned into a cryptographic description of the union of Christ with his Church. A certain divine, when his advice was asked about the method of reading the Scriptures, used to say that his method was to begin at the beginning and read to the end; so that he would spend

three hours at least on the Old Testament for one that he spent on the New, and would read the list of the Dukes of Edom as often as he read the Sermon on the Mount. The first step towards a rational appreciation of the Old Testament is to break up the volume, separate the acts of Joshua or Jehu from the teachings of Jesus, and the different books of the Old Testament from each other. This has been done long since, mentally at least, by the critic; but it has not been done by the churches. Nor have the churches ceased to ascribe the Pentateuch to Moses, the book of Daniel to Daniel, and both parts of Isaiah to the same prophet.

We are told in the book of Joshua (xxiv. 2) that the ancestors of Abraham served other gods. How, or by what influences, whether those of individual reformers like the prophets or of general circumstance, the nation was raised from its primeval worship to tribal monotheism of an eminently pure and exalted type, seems to be a historical mystery. Higher than to tribal monotheism it did not rise; at least, it advanced no further than to the belief

that its God was superior in power as well as in character to all other gods, and thus Lord of the whole earth. Its God was still the God of Israel, and the Jews were still his chosen people. Nor did it wholly get rid of localism. Jerusalem was still the abode of God when Jesus, according to the fourth Gospel, announced to the woman of Samaria the abolition of local religion. Judaism, therefore, never reached the religious elevation of some chosen spirits among the heathen world, such as Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and Epictetus; although the Jewish belief was more intense than that of the philosophers and extended not only to a select circle but to a portion at least of the people.

Nor could the Jew, hampered as he was by lingering tribalism, form a conception of the universality and majesty of divine government in the form of moral law such as we find in Plato or in Cicero. There is nothing in the Hebrew writings like a passage in Cicero's *Republic*, preserved by Lactantius: "There is a true law, right reason,

in unison with nature, all-embracing, consistent, and eternal, which, by its commands, calls to duty, by its prohibitions deters from crime, which, however, never addresses to the good its commands or its prohibitions in vain, nor by command or prohibition moves the wicked. This law cannot be amended, nor can any clause of it be repealed, nor can it be abrogated as a whole. By no vote either of the Senate or of the people can we be released from it. It requires none to explain or to interpret it. Nor will there be one law at Rome and another at Athens; one now and another hereafter. For all nations and for all time there will be one law, immutable and eternal; there will be a common master and ruler of all, — God, the framer, exponent, and enactor of this law, whom he who fails to obey will be recreant to himself, and, renouncing human nature, will, by that very fact, incur the severest punishment, even though he should escape other penalties real or supposed."[1] Equally broad is the lan-

[1] *Divin. Instit.*, VI., 8.

guage of the *De Legibus:* "Since, then, nothing is superior to reason, whether in God or man, it is by partnership in reason, above all, that man is connected with God. Partnership in reason is partnership in right reason; and as law is right reason, law again is a bond between God and man. Community of law is community of right. Those to whom these things are common are citizens of the same commonwealth. If men obey the same power and rule, much more do they obey this celestial code, the divine mind and the supreme power of God. So that we must regard this universe as one and a single commonwealth of gods and men. And whereas in states, on a principle of which we will speak in the proper place, the position of the citizen is marked by his family ties, in the universal nature of things we have something more august and glorious, the bond of kinship between gods and men."[1]

Of a belief in the immortality of the soul no evidence can be found in the Old Testament,

[1] *De Leg.*, I., 7.

though readers of the Bible who continue to use the unrevised version may remain under the impression that the doctrine is found in Job. Sheol is merely, like the Hades of the Odyssey, a shadowy abode of the dead. Had the doctrine of a resurrection been proclaimed in the Mosaic books, it could hardly have been denied by the Sadducees; its acceptance by the Pharisees was a speculation of their school. In Ezekiel xviii. life is held out as the reward of those who do well; death is the penalty of those who do evil. But the "life," for all that appears, is temporal, though the Christian, by reading into it immortality, may apply the chapter to his own use. Enoch and Elijah are represented as translated to heaven, not as living after death, nor is it said that the apparition of Samuel called up by the witch of Endor was the spirit of Samuel himself; it appears rather to have been like the apparitions summoned by the witches in *Macbeth*. The rewards and punishments of the Old Testament are temporal and material; its rewards are wealth and offspring, its punishments are beggary and childlessness. The only immortality

of which it speaks is the perpetuation of a man's family in his tribe. The vindication and requital of Job's virtue are added wealth and multiplied offspring. Nor do we find in the Old Testament that moral immortality, if the expression may be used, which is found in Greek and Roman philosophers, who, without speaking definitely of a life after death, identify the virtuous man with the undying power of virtue and intimate that it will be well with him in the sum of things.

Not assuredly that the Hebrew literature lacks qualities, irrespective of its dogmatic position, such as may well account for the hold which it has retained, in spite of its primeval cosmogony, theology, or morality, on the allegiance of civilized minds. The sublimity of its cosmogony impressed, as we know, Longinus. Voltaire himself could hardly have failed to acknowledge the magnificence of some parts of the prophetic writings, though in other parts he might find marks for his satire. All must be touched by the beauty of the story of Joseph and of the book of Ruth. Admirable, we repeat, are both the religious and the lyrical excel-

lence of some of the Psalms. The histories are marred by tribalism, primeval inhumanity, and fanaticism; but they derive dignity as well as unity from the continuous purpose which runs through them, and which in the main is moral; since Jehovah was a God of righteousness and purity, in contrast with the gods of other tribes. His worship, though ritual, sacrificial, and unlike the worship "in spirit and in truth," the advent of which was proclaimed to the woman of Samaria, was yet spiritual compared with that of deities whose votaries gashed themselves with knives or celebrated lascivious orgies beneath the sacred tree.

Hebrew law is primitive, and the idea of reviving it, conceived by some of the Puritans, was absurd. But it is an improvement in primitive law. It makes human life sacred, treating murder as a crime to be punished with death, not as a mere injury to be compounded by a fine. It recognizes the avenger of blood, the rude minister of justice before the institution of police; but it confines his office to the case of wilful murder, and forbids hereditary blood-feuds. It recognizes asylum, a nec-

essary check on wild primeval passion, but confines it to accidental homicide, ordaining that if a man slay his neighbour with guile, he shall be taken, even from the altar, and put to death. It recognizes the father's power of life and death over his child, *patria potestas* as the Roman called it, but unlike the hideous Roman law, it requires public procedure and a definite charge, while it secures mercy by requiring the concurrence of the mother. It recognizes polygamy, but strives to temper the jealousies and injustice of the harem. It is comparatively hospitable and liberal in its treatment of the stranger. Its Sabbath was most beneficent, especially to the slave, and strict formality was essential to observance among primitive people. Ordeal is confined to the particular case of a wife suspected of infidelity, and divination is forbidden save by the Urim and Thummim. The law mitigates the customs of war, requiring that a city shall be summoned before it is besieged, and forbidding the cutting down of the fruit trees in a hostile country, which was regularly practised by the Greeks; while the female captive,

instead of being dragged at once to the bed of the captor, is allowed a month of mourning. Nor is war exalted or encouraged, as it was among the Assyrians and the Persians. Service is to be voluntary; captains are to be chosen only when the army takes the field, so that there would be no military class; horses and chariots are not to be multiplied. Jehovah, though a God of battles, is not characteristically so. Not victory in war, but peace, is the normal blessing. Kings it was expected the Israelites would have, like the nations around them. But unlike the kings of the nations around them, their king was to be the choice of the nation; he was to be under the law, which he was to study that his heart might not be lifted up among his brethren; and his luxury, his harem, his accumulation of treasure, and his military establishment were to be kept within bounds. Finally, while there was to be a priestly order, that order was not to be a caste. The Levites were to be ordained by the laying on of the hands of the whole assembly of Israel. Nor, while the ritual was consigned to the priest-

hood, was religious teaching confined to them; its organs were the prophet and the psalmist. Worship was sacrificial, and all sacrifice is irrational, but there was no human sacrifice, and the scape-goat was a goat, not, as among the polished Athenians, a man. The American slave-owner could appeal to the Old Testament as a warrant for his institution. Slavery there was everywhere in primitive times, but the Hebrew slave-law is more merciful than that either of Greece or Rome, notwithstanding the ordinance, shocking to our sense, which held the master blameless for killing his slave if death was not immediate, on the ground that the slave "was his money."[1] The belief in witchcraft as a crime to be punished by death is also accepted as true, and, though not prominent, gave birth in misguided Christendom to an almost incredible series of atrocities. How

[1] An essay written by the author on the question "Does the Bible Sanction American Slavery?" has probably been long since forgotten. In its line of argument against slavery as an anachronistic and immoral revival of a primitive and once moral institution it was consistent with the present paper. But the essay was written in the penumbra of orthodoxy and would now require very great modification.

far these ordinances or any of them actually took effect we cannot say. Probably they were to a great extent speculative and ideal. The ordinance against cutting down the fruit trees in an enemy's country certainly was not observed, for the fruit trees of the Moabites are cut down, Elisha giving the word (2 Kings iii. 19). The agricultural polity of family freeholds, reverting to the family in the year of jubilee, may safely be said to have never come into practical existence, but to have been the ideal Republic of some very Hebrew Plato. Nor was the court or the harem of Solomon limited by any jealous regulations.

From the social point of view, perhaps the most notable passages of the Old Testament are those rebuking the selfishness of wealth and the oppression of the poor in the prophetic writings and the Psalms, which have supplied weapons for the champions of social justice. There is scarcely anything like these in Greek or Roman literature. Juvenal complains of the contempt and insult to which poverty exposes a man, but he does not denounce social oppression. In this respect the

Mahometan and the Buddhist are perhaps superior to the Greek or Roman. But we shall hardly find anywhere a moral force equal in intensity to that of the Hebrew prophets, narrowly local and national though their preaching is.

In forming an estimate of Hebrew literature we may have still to be upon our guard against a lingering belief in the inspired character of the books which is apt to betray itself in a somewhat unbounded admiration. Much in the prophets surely is rhapsody to which intense self-excitement might give birth. Of the history we have only the prophet's version, and if the other side had spoken, complaints of gloomy and oppressive fanaticism might have been heard. It was hardly well that modern religion and life should take their colour from a sombre struggle between Jehovah and Baal. There is in Hebrew literature comparatively little of tenderness or geniality, of humour nothing, unless it be the grotesque adventures of Samson among the Philistines. To the growth of science blind belief in the Old Testament, which represents each event of

nature as the direct act of Jehovah, excluding secondary causes, has been morally opposed. Neither of science nor of art had the Jew any share; and both defects make themselves felt.

Religion in the primitive state of man is identified with nationality. For a member of the tribe or of the nation, which inherited the religion of the tribe, to worship any but the tribal or national god or gods is treason punishable by death. "He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto the Lord only he shall be utterly destroyed." To the importation of this feature of an obsolete tribalism into Christianity, Christendom in part at least owes the fatal identification of the Church with the State, the extermination of the Albigenses, the religious wars, the Inquisition, the burning of Servetus. At the end of the seventeenth century a boy was put to death by the Calvinistic fanatics of Scotland for having blasphemed the Lord by disparaging the dogma of the Trinity. Nor have we yet got rid of the shade cast over human life by superstitious use of a literature dark with struggles of

religion or race, stern with denunciation, devoid of humour or playfulness, and seldom in touch with common humanity.

We have been taught by philosophic apologists to believe in Jewish history and legislation as the education of a chosen people directed by the Almighty and leading them gradually from a low to a high morality, from fetishism or primitive superstition to monotheism, and from tribalism to humanity. This, as it recognizes a low beginning and a gradual improvement, is at all events a rational view compared with the common bibliolatry. But Jewish progress after all is only a segment, however momentous a segment, of the progress of civilization. There is nothing in it which denotes the exclusive action of deity. This, since a broader view has been taken of history, is almost universally acknowledged. Then the education thus designated as divine, — in what did it end? In the Jews of Ezra, with their intensified tribalism and self-estrangement from humanity, not only renouncing intermarriage with other races, but ruthlessly putting away the wives, mothers, and children with whom

they had been living; in Pharisaism; in ceremonialism, the most irrational and oppressive; in Jewish angelology and demonology, the craziest of superstitions; in the Talmud with its extravagant legalism and its unspeakable nonsense; in the murder of the great Teacher of humanity and the rejection of his Gospel; in the perpetuation of tribalism of the most hateful kind by a vast cosmopolitan race of usurers wandering over the world without a country, treating, in their pride of race, their fellowmen as gentiles and unclean, preying on all the nations, and inevitably hated by them all.

If Jerusalem may be credited with Christianity as her final development, papal Rome may be credited with the religion of the Reformation. There is a continuity, there is an enduring element in both cases. The Sanhedrim understood Judaism, and when it yelled "Crucify him" it knew what the relation was between its own religion and the teaching of Christ.

That which is not a supernatural revelation may still, so far as it is good, be a manifestation

of the divine. As a manifestation of the divine the Hebrew books, teaching righteousness and purity, may keep their place in our love and admiration for ever; while of their tribalism, their intolerance, their religious cruelty, we for ever take our leave. The time has surely come when as a supernatural revelation they should be frankly though reverently laid aside, and no more allowed to cloud the vision of free inquiry or to cast the shadow of primeval religion and law over our modern life.

It surely is useless and paltering with the truth to set up, like the writer in *Lux Mundi*, and other rationalistic apologists, the figment of a semi-inspiration. An inspiration which errs, which contradicts itself, which dictates manifest incredibilities, such as the stopping of the sun, Balaam's speaking ass, Elisha's avenging bears, or the transformation of Nebuchadnezzar, is no inspiration at all. It requires the supplementary action of human criticism to winnow the divine from the human, the truth from the falsehood; and the result of the process varies with the personal tendencies of

the critics. The use of the phrase "inspiration" when the belief has really been abandoned is worse than weak; it is Jesuitical, and will end as all Jesuitry must end. Those who try to break the fall of orthodoxy will only make the fall heavier at last. When we are told that there are in the Old Testament Scriptures both a human and a divine element, we must ask by what test the divine is to be distinguished from the human and proved to be divine. Nobody would ever have thought of "partial inspiration" except as an expedient to cover retreat. We do but tamper with our own understandings and consciences by such attempts at once to hold on and let go, to retain the shadow of the belief when the substance has passed away. Far better it is, whatever the effort may cost, honestly to admit that the sacred books of the Hebrews, granting their superiority to the sacred books of other nations, are, like the sacred books of other nations, the works of man and not of God. Compared with the semi-inspirationist, the believers in verbal inspiration, of whom some still remain, desperate as are the difficulties with which they

have to contend, stand upon firm ground. Verbal inspiration is at all events a consecrated tradition as well as a consistent view. Semi-inspiration is a subterfuge and nothing more.

That the semi-inspiration theory is entirely new and has sprung up to meet the inroads of destructive criticism, those who have embraced it do not deny. Yet Providence would surely have shown a curious indifference to its own ends if it had so constructed revelation that a false view of it, entailing the most disastrous consequences, should have inevitably prevailed and been disseminated through all the churches till now.

These are troublous times. The trouble is everywhere: in politics, in the social system, in religion. But the storm-centre seems to be in the region of religion. The fundamental beliefs on which our social system has partly rested are giving way. To replace them before the edifice falls, and at the same time to give us such knowledge as may be attainable of man's estate and destiny, thought must be entirely free.

IS THERE ANOTHER LIFE?

IS THERE ANOTHER LIFE?

THE appearance of a portly and learned volume by the Rev. Dr. Salmond on *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality* shows the anxious interest which has been awakened in these questions. His treatment of the subject also recognizes the necessity which is felt of perfectly free though reverent inquiry, as our sole way of salvation amidst the perplexities, theological, social, and moral, in which we are now involved. For himself, he unreservedly accepts the Christian revelation. Christianity, he is so happy as to believe, "has translated the hope of immortality from a guess, a dream, a longing, a probability, into a certainty, and has done this by interpreting us to ourselves and confirming the voice of prophecy within us." But he subjects the sacred records of Christianity to critical exam-

ination. He does not talk effete orthodoxy to an age of reason. Nor does he rest upon the evidence of Revelation alone. He endeavours to combine with it that of Manifestation as presented by reason and history.

The change made by Darwin's great discovery — as, with all rights of modification reserved, it may surely be called,[1] — in our notions regarding the origin of our species could not fail to stimulate curiosity as to its destiny. We held, it is true, before Darwin that man had been formed out of the dust; in that respect our ideas have undergone no change. It is true also that whatever our origin may have been, and through whatever process we may have gone, we are what we are, none the less for Darwin's discovery; while the fact that we have risen from the

[1] I once ventured to ask an eminent Darwinian whether he thought that within any limit of time assignable for the duration of bird life upon this planet, the Darwinian process of natural selection could have produced a bird which should build a nest in anticipation of laying an egg. He said that account must be taken of the faculty of imitation. To which the reply was, that to produce that faculty another Darwinian process, extending through countless æons, would be required.

dust or from the condition of the worm, instead of leading us to despair, ought rather to inspire us with hope. Still, before Darwin we rested in the belief that man had been called into existence by a separate creation, in virtue of which he was a being apart from all other animals; and this belief has by Darwin been dispelled. A being apart from the other animals man remains in virtue of his reason, of which other animals have, at most, only the rudiments, and yet more perhaps in virtue of his aspirations and his capacity for improvement, of which even the most intelligent of the other animals, so far as we can see, have no share. He alone pursues moral good; he alone is religious; he alone is speculative, looking before and after; he alone feels the influence of beauty and expresses his sense of it in poetry and art; what is lust in brutes in him alone is love; he alone thinks or dreams that there is in him anything that ought not to die. Yet Darwin's discovery has effaced the impassable line which we took to have been drawn by a separate creation between man and the beasts which perish.

Science, moreover, Darwinian and general, has put an end to the traditional belief in the soul as a being separate from the body, breathed into the body by a distinct act of the Creator, pent up in it as in a prison-house, beating spiritually against the bars of the flesh and looking to be set free by death. Soul and body, we now know, form an indivisible whole, the nature of man being one, enfolded at first in the same embryo, advancing in all its parts and aspects through the same stages to maturity, and succumbing at last to the same decay. Not that this makes our nature more material in the gross sense of that term. Spirituality is an attribute of moral elevation and aspiration, not of the composition of the organism. Tyndall called himself a "materialist," yet no man was ever less so in the gross sense. If we wish to see clearly in these matters it might be almost better to suspend for a time our use of the word "soul," with its traditional connotation of antagonism to the body, and to speak only of the higher life or of spiritual aim and effort.

We have, moreover, in approaching these

questions to clear our minds entirely of geocentricism, theological and philosophical as well as physical, of our notions of this earth as the centre of the universe and the grand scene of providential action, and at the same time of the ideas of our religious infancy about the Mosaic beginning and the Apocalyptic end of things. We have wholly to banish the creations of Milton's fancy, so strongly impressed upon our imaginations, as well as the Ptolemaic cosmography, and think no more of a heaven above and an earth below, with angels ascending and descending between them, or of a court of heaven looking down upon the earth. We must float out in thought into a universe without a centre, without limit, without beginning or end, of which all that we see on a starlight night is but a point, in which we ourselves are but living and conscious atoms. To fathom the mystery of the universe, — that is, the mystery of existence, — we cannot hope. Of eternity and infinity we can form no notion; we can think of them only as time and space extended without limit, a conception which involves a

metaphysical absurdity, since of space and time we must always think as divisible into parts, while of infinity or eternity there can be no division. The thought of eternal existence, even of a life of eternal happiness, if we dwell upon it, turns the brain giddy; it is a sort of mental torture to attempt to realize the idea.

The doctrine of a future life with rewards for the good and punishment for the wicked, as we all know, pervades the New Testament. That this present world is evil, and Christians must look forward to a better, is the sentiment of the Founder of Christianity and of all the Christian churches. It could not fail to be fostered by the state of the world, especially of a province like Galilee, under the Roman Empire. The Christian martyrdoms are a signal testimony to the same belief. Yet the doctrine can hardly be said to be so distinctly stated in the New Testament as its overwhelming importance might have led us to expect. It is in fact rather assumed than stated. The passages concerning it are rather homiletic than dogmatic;

they are enforcements of the infinite blessedness of piety and goodness, of the infinite curse attending wickedness, rather than enunciations of an article for a creed. Nor is anything explicitly said as to the manner in which the mortal is to put on immortality, or as to the state and occupations of the blessed in the next world. White robes, harps, palm branches, a city of gold and jewels, are not spiritual; they must be taken as material imagery; taken literally, they provoke the derision of the sceptic.

Difficulties crowd upon us and severely tax the exegetical resources of Dr. Salmond. A sudden and absolute change of nature is contrary to all our experience, which would lead us to believe that gradual progress is the law. The disproportion of eternal rewards and punishments to the merits or sins of man's short life is profoundly repugnant to our moral sense. When we take in the cases of children, of savages, of the hapless offspring of the slums, of the heathen who have never heard the Word, the difficulty is immensely increased.

In all the churches there is now a revolt against the belief in eternal fire, which, nevertheless, if the Gospel is to be taken literally, it would seem difficult to avoid. Such a belief in fact can hardly be thought ever to have gained a practical hold on the mind; if it had, it would almost have dissolved humanity with terror. Imagination could not have played with the idea as it does in the poem of Dante, where God, with his everlasting torture-house, is a thousand times more cruel than Eccelino or the tyrants of Milan.

Nor is there in reality any such line of demarcation between the good and the wicked as that drawn in the homiletic language of the Gospel between the wheat and the tares, between the sheep and the goats, between the people of the wide and those of the narrow gate. Between the extreme points of goodness and wickedness there are gradations of character in number infinite and fluctuating from hour to hour. The Roman Catholic Church tries to meet this difficulty by the invention of Purgatory, which, it is needless to say, is a creation of her own. In this case

also the difficulty is enhanced when we take in children and those on whom circumstances have borne so hardly as almost to preclude volition.

Is the doctrine of resurrection to be extended to every being that has borne human form, — the Caliban just emerging from the ape, the cave-dweller, the Carib, the idiot, as well as the infant in whom reason and morality had barely dawned? Where can the line be drawn?

Nor are the passages in the Gospel concerning the future state, if pressed literally, altogether consistent with each other, at least with regard to the mode of the transition. The idea generally presented is that of a final judgment in which the good are to be separated from the wicked, the good entering into eternal joy, the wicked into eternal fire, and of a period of sleep or unconsciousness which is to last till the Judgment Day. But this is not consistent with the parable of Dives and Lazarus, with the preaching of Christ to the souls in prison, or with the words of Christ on the cross to the penitent thief. These variations become more important when

we consider the unspeakably vital character of the doctrine.

Resurrection of the body is an article of the Creed. It presents insuperable difficulties; not only are the particles of the body dispersed, but they must often be incorporated into other bodies. Besides, is a babe to rise again a babe, and is an old man to rise with the body of old age? Devices for meeting such difficulties may be found; but they are devices and not solutions. St. Paul's answer to doubters involves the false analogy of the seed, which germinates when he fancies that it dies.

It is on the Christian revelation that our hope has hitherto rested. Butler, when he applies reason to the question of a future life, has revelation all the time in reserve. He professes not to offer independent proof of the doctrine, but merely to disarm Reason of the objections which she might urge against Revelation. Of independent proof, with deference be it said, he offers, not so much as, with our present scientific lights at all events, will amount even to a serious intimation.

Assuming, after the fashion of his day, that the soul is a being apart from the body, he suggests that it may be a simple monad, indecerptible and therefore indestructible, or at least not presumably liable to dissolution when the body is dissolved. But we know that his presumption is unfounded, and that what he calls the soul is but the higher and finer activity of our general frame. He says that the faculties and emotions sometimes remain unaffected by mortal disease even at the point of death. But they do not remain unaffected by a disease of the brain. His strongest point perhaps is the unbroken continuance of conscious identity notwithstanding the change of our bodily frame by the flux of its component particles, and in spite of sleep and fits of insensibility. But the flux of particles or the suspension of consciousness by sleep or a fainting fit is a different thing from total dissolution, such as takes place when the body moulders in the grave. Besides, the phenomenon is common to us with brutes, and the objection that this or any other of Butler's arguments would apply as well to brutes

as to man is not to be evaded by calling it invidious. The great thinker would perhaps have seen this more clearly had he lived in the Darwinian age and been disenchanted of his belief in the special breathing of a soul into man. He is so far from our present point of view as to think that dreams are products of the mind acting apart from the bodily sense. Do not dogs also dream?

There are those who, like Mr. Francis Newman when he wrote *The Soul*, discard all arguments on this subject addressed to the intellect apart from the intuitions of the spiritual man. Intuition is incommunicable, and it is to the intellect alone that arguments can be addressed. Besides, if intuition or faith were traced to its source, it might be found to have sprung from an intellectual conviction implanted in early years. The existence of such a faculty as religious intuition independent of any action of the intellect would surely be difficult to demonstrate.

The great thinkers of antiquity, while they lacked our modern science, had the advantage, when they had once thrown off their state

polytheism, of studying the problem of existence with minds free from ecclesiastical or theological prepossession. Of the two greatest of them Plato believed intensely in a future life, for which this present life is but a training, and in a future state of rewards and punishments. His arguments, put into the mouth of Socrates, who is about to die, come to us in the most persuasive guise. But they are entangled with the fanciful tenets of preexistence, of knowledge as a reminiscence from a previous state, and of the real existence of abstract ideas. They are based on the erroneous conception of the soul as an entity distinct from the body and imprisoned in it, so that, in the case at least of one who has kept his soul pure and healthy by philosophy and asceticism, death would be emancipation. The soul, Plato thinks, cannot be affected by diseases of the body, but only by its own diseases, ignorance and vice. An evidence of more weight practically than any of the metaphysical arguments adduced by the disciple of Socrates is the death of Socrates itself, which, like the Christian martyrdoms, implies a strong

and rooted faith in the future reward of loyalty to truth and virtue. The same faith is expressed by Plato in the *Republic*. To him amid the license of Athenian democracy in its hour of decay, as to the Christian amid the demoralization of the Roman Empire, the world seemed evil; and he found support for righteousness in the conviction that though the righteous man may suffer obloquy, persecution, and even a painful and shameful death in this life, it would be well for him in the final result. If there is a soul of the universe and if it holds communion in any way with the soul of man, such a belief would seem likely to be no mere hallucination.

In Aristotle's *Ethics* there is no trace of the doctrine, either in its specific form or in the form of faith in the ultimate triumph of virtue which it assumes in Plato. The fact is that virtue, in our sense of the word and as denoting obedience to a moral law, is hardly a term of Aristotle's system. His virtue is not so much obedience to a moral law as the functional activity of fully developed and perfectly balanced humanity, such as is pre-

sented with a rather statuesque dignity in his moral character of the high-minded man (*μεγαλόψυχος*). All that he wants is a life sufficiently long for full development (*βίος τέλειος*). Of compensation or retribution he seems to have no idea.

In the great Stoics, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, there is no expression of belief in a personal life beyond the present. What they seem to expect is absorption in the universe, which, if personality is merged, would be the extinction of our personal selves. On the other hand, they show the profoundest faith in the divinity of the moral law, in the nothingness of present pleasures or pains, and in the infinite reward of virtue. Their asceticism — that of Marcus Aurelius on a throne — was a practical demonstration of their faith. In Seneca may be found a vague intimation of belief that death is a transition to a higher life; but Seneca is a rhetorician rather than a philosopher.

A belief in the immortality of the soul has been a part of most of the religions, yet not of all. It is absent from the sacred books

of the Hebrews, strenuous as have been the efforts to import it into them, and bold as is the statement of the Anglican Articles that both in the Old and the New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind through Christ. An exception such as that of the Hebrews, an eminently religious nation, is enough to bar any argument from universal consent, even if universal consent, where it can be explained by natural desire, were sufficient to prove a belief innate. The other world has often formed the lucrative domain of priests, who have pretended by mystic rites to provide the dying with a passport to celestial bliss. Egypt seems to have been preeminent in the definiteness of her creed and the minuteness of her mortuary ritual, while she was also strangely preëminent in the effort to protract the existence of the bodily tenement, showing thereby apparently an absence of belief in the separate existence of the soul. The Persian faith in a future life appears also to have been strong, though mixed with degrading absurdities which make it philosophically worthless. Buddhism is a philosophy

rather than a religion, while upon any hypothesis as to the meaning of Nirvana, the hope of the Buddhist is not personal immortality but escape from personal existence. Be Nirvana what it may, it is a fancy, generated in part by local influences, and offers nothing in the way of verification.

"The evidences of a future life, sir, are sufficient," was Boswell's remark to Johnson. "I could wish for more, sir," was Johnson's reply. It was no doubt his sense of the insufficiency of the evidences, considering the vital character of the doctrine, that disposed Johnson to belief in ghosts, and made him anxious to investigate all stories of the kind, even when they were so absurd as that of the ghost of Cock Lane. It cannot be necessary to discuss such fictions. The only case, so far as we are aware, in which there is anything like first-hand evidence is that of the warning apparition to Lord Lyttelton, which may be explained as the masked suicide of a voluptuary sated with life. Nor can Spiritualistic apparitions call for notice here. They have been enough exposed. Nothing is proved by them

but the fond credulity of bereavement pining for communion with the lost. Spiritualism, it should not be forgotten, had its farcical origin in table-turning. Apart from the miraculous resurrection of Christ, and Christ's miraculous raisings from the dead, no one has been seen or heard from after death. That evidence which alone could be absolutely conclusive has never been afforded. This is the stubborn fact with which Butler and those who adopt his line of argument have to contend.

Positivism hopes that it has indemnified, or more than indemnified, us for the loss of personal immortality by tendering an impersonal immortality in the consequences of our lives and actions prolonged through the generations which come after us to the end of time. But this immortality is not only impersonal, it is unconscious, and, therefore, so far as our sensations are concerned, not distinguishable from annihilation. It is not even specially human; we share it with every motor, animate or inanimate; with the horse which draws a wagon, with the water which turns a mill, with the food which passes into

the muscles of the consumer, with the falling stone.

Besides, all theories which pretend to console man for his mortality by making him a partaker in the immortality of his race, seem, as was said before, to encounter the objection that the race itself is not immortal. How long the planet which is the abode of man will last or remain fit for man's habitation, the oracles of science may not be agreed, but they appear to be agreed in holding that the end must come. If they are right, philosophy does but mock us when she bids us find our real spiritual life in efforts to perfect humanity, and our paradise in anticipation of the state of bliss into which humanity, when perfected, will be brought. At a certain, however remote, date planetary wreck will be the end. Nor has the promise of perfection by evolution, such as another school of thinkers holds out, any advantage in this respect over the promise of perfection by effort. Evolution, like effort, comes at last to naught. That death is the renewing of the species, and apparently indispensable to progress, might be a satisfactory

reflection if the species were everything and the individual were nothing. But the individual is something in his own eyes. Against any scientific theory that human organisms are simply vehicles for the transmission of life the consciousness of each organism protests and rebels. It is conceivable that by the progress of humanity, before the end of our world, some glorious consummation may be reached. But it is hardly conceivable that in that consummation we or the cave-dwellers can have a share.

Still less can any substitute for our hope of a personal immortality be found in demonstrations of the indefeasible vitality of protoplasm. The hope which we resign is personal. Protoplastic vitality is not. Life more or less active may, as these comforters tell us, pervade all things; and in that sense we may continue to live after our dissolution and absorption into the general frame of nature. But what is the value of a life of which we shall not be individually conscious? There may be life in the fermentation of a dunghill. But who can imagine himself blest in the prospect of sharing it?

Of death and of the perpetual renewal of the race the necessity is obvious so far as the present estate of man is concerned. Upon the succession of generations man's conjugal and parental character, among other things, depends. The existence of an undying man would be that of one of Swift's "Struldbrugs" infinitely prolonged.

There are those who think to console themselves for the shortness of life and its final extinction at death, by saying that its very shortness makes it all the more precious while it lasts, and that a pensive, or, to use their phrase, an idyllic tenderness, is imparted to it by the prospect of its extinction. Such an argument seems open to an easy reduction to absurdity, since it implies that the more brief and precarious the possession the more valuable is the thing possessed. A great deal of poetry, no doubt, has its source in our mortality. But such poetry is not an expression of enjoyment or gladness; it is a melodious sigh in which sadness finds relief.

It may be admitted that our non-existence in the future is not less conceivable than

our non-existence in the past, which we take as certain, notwithstanding the Socratic fancy of reminiscence. But we now exist, and the question whether we continue to exist or return to nothing is one of probability and evidence, not of possible conception. That the universe might do without us we may modestly admit; whether it intends to do without us is what we are feebly endeavouring to divine.

John Stuart Mill, in a passage of his essay on *Immortality*, highly lauded by Fitzjames Stephen, admits the possibility of conceiving that thought may continue to exist without a material brain, the relation of the two being no metaphysical necessity, but simply a constant coexistence within the limits of observation. Even if we suppose thought to embrace life, feeling, and affection, the mere admission that its disembodied existence is conceivable would be but cold comfort. Mill himself seems to fall back on the enjoyment of the present life exalted by the religion of humanity and ending in what he calls "eternal rest." "If," he says in his essay on *The Utility of Religion*,

"the Religion of Humanity were as sedulously cultivated as the supernatural religions are, . . . all who had received the customary amount of moral cultivation would up to the hour of death live ideally in the life of those who are to follow them." What is the Religion of Humanity? How can there be a religion without a God? How can we worship a generalization which cannot hear prayer or hymn, which is not even complete, since the history of man is unfinished, and of which, to enhance the anomaly, the worshipper himself is a part? Is the religion of Humanity anything more than a fervid philanthropy which must probably be confined to a few choice spirits and, so far as it involves self-sacrifice, is not likely to be increased by the conviction that the philanthropist, in giving up present good, gives up all? What again is ideal life but unreal life? What is unreal life but death? To Mill it appears probable that after a length of time different in different persons they would have had enough of existence and would gladly lie down to take their eternal rest. Death is not rest:

it is destruction. When we lay ourselves down to rest it is with the prospect of waking again refreshed and invigorated to new life. A Greek poet spoke to the heart when he tearfully contrasted the lot of man with that of the flowers of the field, which renew their growth at the return of spring, while man with all his bravery and wisdom, once laid in his dark and narrow bed, sleeps a sleep which knows no waking.

Yet it is not the extinction of bravery and wisdom that most moves our pity for ourselves. This the next generation may repair. The torch of science is handed on, and the discovery half made by one man of science is completed, when he is gone, by a successor. It is the perpetual slaughter of affection that touches us most, and that, we should think, would most touch the Power in whose hands we are, if in its nature there is any affinity to mortal love. Affection at all events, without the survival of the personalities, must die for ever.

The mere existence of a desire in man to prolong his being, even if it were universal, can afford little assurance that the desire will

be fulfilled. Of desires that will never be fulfilled man's whole estate is lamentably full. If to each of us his own little being is inexpressibly dear, so is its own little being to the insect, which nevertheless is crushed without remorse and without hope of a future existence.

It is sad that man should perish, and perish just when he has reached his prime. This seems like cruel wastefulness in nature. But is not nature full of waste? Butler rather philosophically finds an analogy to the waste of souls in the waste of seeds. He might have found one in the destruction of geological races, in the redundancy of animal life, which involves elimination by wholesale slaughter, in the multitude of children brought into the world only to die. The deaths of children, of which a large number appear inevitable, seem to present an insurmountable stumbling-block to any optimism which holds that nature can never be guilty of waste, even in regard to the highest of her works. Waste there evidently is in nature both animate and inanimate, and to an enormous extent if our intelligence tells us true. The earth is full of waste places as

well as of blind agencies of destruction, such as earthquakes, volcanic fires, and floods, while her satellite appears to be nothing but waste.

Can we rest on the presumption that for all suffering, at least for all unmerited suffering, here, supreme justice must have provided compensation hereafter? Is there not an infinity of suffering among animals? Are not many of them by the very constitution of nature doomed as the prey of other animals to suffer agonies of fear and at last a painful death? Are not others fated to be tortured by parasites? Yet where will be their compensation? Where will be the compensation of the hapless dog which writhes beneath the knife of the vivisector, and which not only is innocent but is an involuntary benefactor of humanity?

That a survey of nature drives us to one of two conclusions, either to the conclusion that Benevolence is not omnipotent or to the conclusion that Omnipotence is not, in our acceptation of the term, purely benevolent, has been proved with a superfluity of logic. What may be behind the veil we cannot tell. But in that which is manifested to us there seems to be

nothing that can warrant us in looking for immortality as the certain gift of unlimited benevolence invested with unlimited power. What lies beyond that which is manifested to us is the region not of demonstration but of hope.

Yet man shrinks from annihilation. If he were certified of it, in spite of all that science or criticism has done to prepare him for disenchantment, and notwithstanding the soothing talk of philosophers about "eternal rest," his being would receive a great shock. A fearful light would be thrown on the misery and degradation of which the world is full, has always been full, and is likely long to remain full. A fearful light would be thrown on all the horrors of history. The sufferers of the past at all events derived no comfort amidst famine, plague, massacre, and torture, from these theories of an "ideal life," of a "Religion of Humanity," and of a "posthumous and subjective existence in the progress of the species." A selfish tyrant like Louis XIV. would on this supposition, at least while his fortune lasted, have been of all men the

happiest, while the victims of his selfish ambition or rapine, slaughtered in his profligate wars, perishing of hunger through his extravagance, or worked to death as slaves in his galleys, would have been of all men the most miserable.

Is there any voice in our nature which distinctly tells us that death is not the end? If there is, there seems to be no reason why we should not listen to it, even though its message may be incapable of verification such as in regard to a material hypothesis is required by physical science. That the intelligence of our five senses, of which science is the systematized record, is exhaustive, we have, as was before said, no apparent ground for assuming; the probability seems to be the other way; it seems likely that our senses, mere nerves even if completely evolved, are imperfect monitors, and that we may be living in a universe of which we really know as little as the mole, which no doubt seems to itself to perceive everything that is perceptible, knows of the world of sight. Now, there does seem to be a voice in every man which, if he will listen to

it, tells him that his account is not closed at death. The good man, however unfortunate he may have been, and even though he may not have found integrity profitable, feels at the end of life a satisfaction in his past and an assurance that in the sum of things he will find that he has chosen aright. The most obdurately wicked man, however his wickedness may have prospered, will probably wish when he comes to die that he had lived the life of the righteous. It may be possible to explain the sanctions or warnings of conscience generally as the influence of human opinion reflected in the individual mind, transmitted perhaps by inheritance and accumulated in transmission. But such an explanation will hardly cover the case of death-bed self-approbation or remorse. There seems to be no reason why we should not trust the normal indications of our moral nature as well as the normal indications of our bodily sense; and against the belief that the greatest benefactors and the greatest enemies of mankind rot at last undistinguished in the same grave our moral nature vehemently rebels.

This at all events is certain: if death is to end all alike for the righteous and for the unrighteous, for those who have been blessings and for those who have been curses to their kind, the Power which rules the universe cannot be just in any sense of the word which we can understand.

Is there anything which appears to transcend the conditions of man's present existence, to be likely to survive and be carried over to a larger sphere of being? This seems to be the practical question if the subject is to be regarded from the strictly rational point of view. Character is no doubt formed by action on a basis of natural tendency, under the moulding environment of circumstance; nor can it be affirmed that there is anything in moral action not dictated by the present requirements of our state as domestic and social beings, having relations with others, as well as being under the necessity of caring for ourselves. Yet, while formed and manifested by acting in conformity with the rules of our present life, character seems when formed to have a value and a beauty of its own, apart from its use-

fulness in current action; so that we can contemplate it, mark its improvement or deterioration in ourselves, and make its improvement the object of distinct and conscious effort. What we call spiritual life seems in fact to be the cultivation of character carried on under religious influence by a sort of inner self. It is conceivable that good and beautiful character may be prized by the Soul of the Universe, if the universe has a soul, as capable of union with itself, and that it may thus transcend the limits of our being here. If this is but a hint, on a question at once so dark and of such overwhelming importance, we may gladly welcome the faintest gleam of light.

At the same time, so far as we can discern, character can be formed only by effort, which implies something against which to strive; so that without evil, or what appears to us evil, character could not be formed. The existence of evil in fact, so far as we can see, is the necessary condition of active life. For aught we know, effort, or something which we can only describe as effort, not fiat or mere

evolution, may be the real law of the universe. It is true that the immortality to which any suggestion of this kind points would be of the conditional kind, since good character only could have a life-giving affinity to the power of good.

To all the questionings about the origin of evil, which the writer of Genesis answered by the story of the Forbidden Fruit, our answer must be that what we call evil is a part of the constitution of the universe.

Supposing all proofs of personal immortality failed us, we should have to fall back upon the Stoic idea of reabsorption in the universe and union with its workings and destinies, whatever they may be. If consciousness and affection are lost, pain, suffering, and unfulfilled desire at all events will be no more.

All arguments of this kind of course have relation to the natural aspect of things apart from revelation. He who, with Dr. Salmond, believes that he has a divine revelation in the Gospel, and a pledge of immortality in union with Christ, can stand in no

need of further assurance otherwise than in the way of corroboration. He discusses the natural evidences, like Butler, with revelation in reserve.

There are those who think they display their good sense in bidding us give up these speculations, which, they tell us, are beyond the range of our understandings, and cultivate our pleasure and happiness in the present world. One element of our pleasure and happiness is the gratification of curiosity on the highest subjects. Our curiosity has been or is being gratified as to the origin of our species, and surely the destiny of our species is a question not less interesting even to science, while it is inevitably set on foot by the other. However, pleasure and happiness are different things. Pleasure may be felt by the condemned convict in eating his last meal. But happiness seems to imply the sense of security and permanence. It can hardly be predicated of a being whose life is never safe and at most endures but for an hour.

The estate of man upon this earth of ours may in course of time be vastly improved.

So much seems to be promised by the recent achievements of science, whose advance is in geometrical progression, each discovery giving birth to several more. Increase of health and extension of life by sanitary, dietetic, and gymnastic improvement; increase of wealth by invention, and of leisure by the substitution of machinery for labour; more equal distribution of wealth, with its comforts and refinements; diffusion of knowledge; political improvement; elevation of the domestic affections and social sentiments; unification of mankind, and elimination of war through ascendency of reason over passion, — all these things may be carried to an indefinite extent, and may produce what in comparison with the present estate of man would be a terrestrial paradise. Selection and the merciless struggle for existence may be in some measure superseded by selection of a more scientific and merciful kind. Death may be deprived at all events of its pangs. On the other hand, the horizon does not appear to be clear of cloud. The pressure of population is a danger which the anti-Malthusian can no

longer set at naught, and to check which it is certain that Providence will not interpose. The tendency of the factory with its increasing division of labour has not hitherto been to make industrial life less monotonous or more cheerful. Frost, heat, storm, drought, and earthquake, human progress can hardly abate. Art and poetry do not seem likely to advance with the ascendency of severe science. There is some truth in the saying of the poet that a glory has passed away from the earth. However, let our fancy suppose the most chimerical of Utopias realized in a commonwealth of man. Mortal life prolonged to any conceivable extent is but a span. Still over every festal board in the community of terrestrial bliss will be cast the shadow of approaching death; and the sweeter life becomes, the more bitter death will be. The more bitter it will be at least to the ordinary man, and the number of philosophers like John Stuart Mill is small.

THE MIRACULOUS ELEMENT IN CHRISTIANITY

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The effect produced by the teaching of Jesus and his disciples is, beyond question, the most momentous fact in history. If circumstances, such as the fusion of races under the Roman Empire and the distress attendant on the decline of the Empire concurred, Christianity was the motive power. The conversion of Saul marks the greatness of the moral change. It is the proclamation of a new ideal of human brotherhood and purity of life. Here, if at any point in history, we may believe that the Spirit of the World, if the world has a spirit, was at work. If evil to a terrible extent as well as good has apparently flowed from the Gospel; if Christianity has given birth to priestcraft, intolerance, persecution, and religious war, as well as to

some perversions of morality, it is because the miraculous elements, and the circle of ecclesiastical dogma which under the theosophic influences of the succeeding age formed itself around them, have been allowed to overlay and obscure the character and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

The author of *Supernatural Religion*, after demolishing, as he conceives, the authority of the ecclesiastical canon, himself says of the ethical system of Christianity: —

"It must be admitted that Christian ethics were not in their details either new or original. The precepts which distinguish the system may be found separately in early religions, in ancient philosophies, and in the utterances of the great poets and seers of Israel. The teaching of Jesus, however, carried morality to the sublimest point attained or even attainable by humanity. The influence of his spiritual religion has been rendered doubly great by the unparalleled purity and elevation of his own character. Surpassing in his sublime simplicity and earnestness the moral grandeur of Çhâkya-mouni, and putting

to the blush the sometimes sullied, though generally admirable, teaching of Socrates and Plato, and the whole round of Greek philosophers, he presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with his own lofty principles, so that the 'imitation of Christ' has become almost the final word in the preaching of his religion, and must continue to be one of the most powerful elements of its permanence. His system might not be new, but it was in a high sense the perfect development of natural morality, and it was final in this respect amongst others, that, superseding codes of law and elaborate rules of life, it confined itself to two fundamental principles: love to God and love to man. Whilst all previous systems had merely sought to purify the stream, it demanded the purification of the fountain. It placed the evil thought on a par with the evil action. Such morality, based upon the intelligent and earnest acceptance of divine law, and perfect recognition of the brotherhood of man, is the highest conceivable by humanity, and although

its power and influence must augment with the increase of enlightenment, it is itself beyond development, consisting as it does of principles unlimited in their range and inexhaustible in their application. Its perfect realization is that true spiritual Nirvâ*n*a which Çhâkya-mouni has clearly conceived, and obscured with Oriental mysticism: extinction of rebellious personal opposition to divine order, and the attainment of perfect harmony with the will of God."[1]

Of the four religions which have been styled universal, Christianity alone is universal in fact. Christianity alone preaches its Gospel to the whole world. A Buddhist element has recently found its way into a certain school of European philosophy, but not through Buddhist preaching or under a Buddhist form. Mahometanism and Buddhism are something more than local or tribal, yet less than universal. Mahometanism is military, as its Koran avows. In conquest it lives, with conquest it decays; it also practically belongs to the despotic, polygamic, and slave-owning

[1] Vol. II., pp. 487–8.

East. It has never been the religion of a Western race, or of a free and industrial community. By arms it has been propagated, or by local influence and contagion, not by missions. Buddhism, if it is really a religion and not rather a quietist philosophy engendered of languor and suffering, is partly a religion of climate and of race; of its boasted myriads the majority, the Chinese, retain little more than a tincture of Buddha, while all are enclosed within a ring-fence in a particular quarter of the globe. Its European offspring is a philosophy of despair. Judaism, after its rejection of Christianity, itself fell back into a tribalism, which is of all tribalisms morally the most anti-social, since it is not primitive and natural but self-enforced and artificially maintained in the face of humanity; while the proselytism which was rife when the philosophic Judaism of Philo was verging on universality has since that epoch ceased. It is to be noted also that Christianity is almost alone in its display of recuperative power. No parallel to the revivals of Wycliff, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley is presented by any

other religion. The Wahabi movement will hardly be thought as a spiritual revival to deserve that rank.

Moral civilization and sustained progress have been thus far limited to Christendom. So have distinct and effective ideas of human brotherhood, which implies a common fraternity, and of the service of humanity. In Buddhism, if they have been distinct, they cannot be said to have been equally effective. They seem to be closely connected with the Christian idea of the Church, with its struggle for the emancipation of the world from the powers of evil and with its hope of final victory.

Much, therefore, of what we have cherished would still stand even if our evidence for the miracles should fall.

We need hardly expend thought on the discussion as to the possibility of believing in miracles. The very term supposes the existence of a power above nature, able to reveal itself by a suspension of nature's ordinary course and willing so to reveal itself for the salvation of mankind. There is nothing apparently repugnant to reason in such a sup-

position. The existence of the power is even implied in the phrase "laws of nature" constantly used by science; for wherever there is a law there must be a law-giver, and the law-giver must be presumed capable of suspending the operation of law. This Hume himself would hardly have denied. In fact, the metaphysical argument against miracles comes, as has been said before, pretty much to this, that a miracle cannot take place, because if it did it would be a miracle. We could not help believing our own senses if we actually saw a man raised from the dead. There is no reason why we should not believe the testimony of other people, provided that they were eye-witnesses, that they were competent in character and in intelligence, and that their testimony had been submitted to impartial and thorough investigation. Suppose a hundred men of known character, judgment, and scientific attainments were to unite in declaring that they had seen a blind man restored to sight or a man raised from the dead in circumstances precluding the possibility of fraud or illusion,

should we, as Hume says, at once reject their testimony? On what ground? On the ground of universal experience? Experience, being only previous uniformity, is broken by a well-attested exception. We assume an adequate object, such as the revelation to man of vital truth undiscoverable by his own intellect would be. It is simply a question of evidence. All will allow that we require either the evidence of our own senses or an extraordinary amount of unexceptionable testimony to warrant us in accepting a miracle.

That the Supreme Being, supposing that he intended to reveal himself by miracle for the salvation of mankind, and required belief in the miracle as the condition of our salvation, would provide us with conclusive evidence, may surely be assumed. A miracle is an appeal to our reason through our senses, and to make it valid either the evidence of our own senses, or evidence equivalent to that of our own senses, is required. To call upon us to believe without sufficient evidence would be to put an end to belief itself in any rational sense of the term. Theologians

always take advantage of proof so far as it is forthcoming. Faith, to which they have appealed in defect of proof, is a belief, not in things unproved, but in things unseen. Miracles may be accepted on the evidence of a church assumed to be itself divine; they may even be accepted on the supposed evidence of a spiritual sense illuminated by divine influence; but if we are to accept them on the evidence of reason, there must be satisfactory eye-witnesses. What ocular testimony do we possess?

In the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul says that the risen Christ had appeared to him. He says simply appeared (ὤφθη). He gives no particulars nor anything which can enable us to judge whether the apparition was certainly real, or whether it may have been the product of ecstatic imagination, like the apparition seen by Colonel Gardiner or those which made Coleridge say that he did not believe in ghosts because he had seen too many of them. Three detailed accounts of the vision are given in the Acts, but not one of them can

be traced to St. Paul, though two of them are put into his mouth; and they are at variance with each other, one (Acts ix. 7) saying that St. Paul's fellow-travellers heard the voice but saw no man; another (Acts xxii. 9) saying that they saw the light but did not hear the voice; while the utterances of the voice itself differ widely in the three passages (compare Acts ix. 4–7, with Acts xxii. 7, 8, and more especially with Acts xxvi. 14–19), though it would seem that the words ought to have made an indelible impression; not to mention that "it is hard for thee to kick against the goad" is a strange phrase to be used by a voice from heaven.

In the same passage of the first Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul states "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he had been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures; that he had appeared unto Cephas, then to the twelve; that he had afterwards appeared to about five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remained till that time, but some were fallen asleep; then to James; then

to all the apostles." It is natural to assume that St. Paul learned this from Peter and James, the two apostles whom he saw on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. But he does not cite their authority, much less does he say that he had taken any measures to sift their evidence. Nor is it likely that he would have taken such measures, being, as he was, an ardent proselyte of three years' standing, and having staked his spiritual life on the resurrection of Christ. Here again he uses the expression "appeared" (ὤφθη), and leaves us once more to speculate on the effect of enthusiasm in giving birth to visions and on the contagion of excited imagination. He says nothing about the intercourse of the risen Christ with his Apostles during the days preceding the Ascension. Nor does it seem easy to harmonize his story with that of the Gospels.

Some attestations of miracles given in the Acts are in the first person, implying that an eye-witness is speaking. The eye-witness, however, is anonymous, and we have no means of testing his trustworthiness. The

escape of St. Paul at Melita from the sting of the viper which had come out of the burning sticks and fastened on his hand, and his prophetic reliance upon God in the shipwreck, while they are vividly attested, can hardly be called miraculous.

In 1 Corinthians xii. 4–11, St. Paul refers in a general way to the existence of miraculous gifts among members of the Church: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits: to another divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues:

but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will." Gifts of divers kinds of tongues and of the interpretation of tongues, it will be observed, are put on a level with the rest, though St. Paul himself (1 Corinthians xiv.) treats those gifts as equivocal, and we know from modern experience that they may be the offspring of self-delusion; while the account of the gift of tongues in Acts ii. 8, as that of speaking divers known languages, is at variance with the words of St. Paul, who describes it as that of speaking in a tongue unknown to all. St. Paul does not testify to the occurrence of any specific miracle other than his own vision, nor does he profess to have performed a specific miracle himself. His general appeal is not to miracles but to the divine character and merits of Christ.

In the first Epistle of St. Peter there are allusions (i. 3 and iii. 18) to the resurrection of Christ. But they are connected with an allusion to his preaching "unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in

the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing"; a tradition which implies belief in the Noachic legend, while its character seems to militate against the authenticity of the Epistle as the work of a companion of Christ, since actual contact with reality usually sets bounds to imagination. In the second Epistle of St. Peter there is an allusion to the Transfiguration. But the authenticity of the second Epistle of St. Peter is strongly impugned and feebly defended.

The testimony comprised in the above passages is, apparently, the sum-total of the ocular evidence producible for the miraculous part of Christianity. Besides this there is nothing but tradition of unknown origin recorded by unknown writers at a date uncertain and, for aught that we can tell, many years after the events. The four Gospels are anonymous. Two of them, the second and third, are not even ascribed to eye-witnesses, while the preface to the third distinctly implies that it is not the work of an eye-witness, but of one of a number of compilers. The first Gospel, if Matthew were

really its author, would be the work of an eye-witness. But it seems to be certainly attested that if Matthew wrote a Gospel at all it was in Hebrew, whereas the first Gospel is in Greek and is pronounced to be not even a translation from the Hebrew. In the fourth Gospel there is an attestation; but it is anonymous and suspicious, serving rather to shake than to confirm our belief in apostolic authorship; for why should not the writer himself have given his name instead of leaving the authenticity to be attested by an unknown hand? Of the proof tendered for the authenticity of this Gospel as the work of St. John, it may safely be said that it is not such as would be accepted in the case of any ordinary work. Of the most recent experts there is a decided and apparently growing majority on the other side. The Apocalypse as well as the Gospel was ascribed by the Church to St. John, and as the difference of character and style is such that the two cannot have been by the same hand, whatever makes for the authenticity of the Apocalypse makes against the authen-

ticity of the Gospel. Nothing can seem more unlikely than that a Gospel tinctured with Alexandrian theosophy should be the work of a simple fisherman of Galilee. Nor is there any similarity between the character of John depicted in the first three Gospels and that with which the fourth Gospel is suffused. The writer's attitude of aversion towards the Jews and his references to their laws and customs as those of another nation are scarcely compatible with the supposition that he was himself a Jew.

Not one of the four Gospels can be shown with any certainty to have existed in its present form till a period had elapsed after the events fully sufficient, in a totally uncritical age, for the growth of any amount of miraculous legend, as the biographies of numerous saints in the Middle Ages prove. This much at the very least seems to have been established by the author of *Supernatural Religion*, whose main argument, as Matthew Arnold says, is not to be shaken by pursuing him into minor issues and discrediting him there. It is alleged that the Gospels must have been written before the

destruction of Jerusalem, because they do not refer to that catastrophe but seem to speak of the "altar" as if it were still existing. The answer appears to be that if the traditions worked up by the Evangelists were anterior to the fall of Jerusalem, there is no reason why that event should be imported into them. Legends do not ordinarily mention intervening events. Besides, there does appear in Matthew xxiv. and Mark xiii. to be an allusion to the flight of the Christians in the day of conflict.

In the narratives of the first three Evangelists, there is found a large common element. It appears that if the whole text of the Synoptics is broken up into one hundred and seventy-four sections, fifty-eight of these are common to all three; twenty-six besides to Matthew and Mark; seventeen to Mark and Luke; thirty-two to Matthew and Luke; leaving only forty-one unshared elements, of which thirty-one are found in Luke, seven in Matthew, and three in Mark.[1]

[1] Martineau, *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 184. See also the following pages.

This similarity in the selection of a limited portion of the Life, combined with the actual identity of language in so many passages, has been justly thought to preclude the hypothesis of independent authorship and to suggest compilation on a common basis. There must on that supposition have been an interval of time between the events and the compilation during which the common basis was formed.

It is surely incredible that divine Providence, intending to consign facts on the knowledge of which the salvation of man depended to particular writings, should not have placed the authorship and date of those writings beyond a doubt.

Not one of the four Evangelists claims inspiration. The author of the third Gospel seems distinctly to renounce it, putting his narrative on a level with a number of others, over which he asserts his superiority, if at all, only in carefulness of investigation. The Church, however, has treated all four Gospels as equally inspired. Papias on the other hand, in the middle of the second century, seems to recognize no Gospel as inspired, holding that

nothing derived from books was so profitable as the living voice of tradition.

There would be a natural and almost overwhelming temptation to ascribe an anonymous and popular history of Christ to one of the apostles; and this would be done in an uncritical age without any thought of fraud. It is true that we accept without question the works of Tacitus and other ancient historians, though anonymous, as those of their reputed authors. But in these cases there was no temptation to false ascription, nor does it greatly signify who wrote the history, the facts neither requiring an extraordinary amount of evidence, nor being vital to the salvation of mankind.

Of some of the miraculous parts of the Gospel, such, for instance, as the Temptation in the Wilderness, and the Agony in the Garden, with the descent of the angel, there could be no eye-witnesses. Of the Annunciation and the Immaculate Conception the only possible witness tells us nothing. It is hard indeed to see how we could have eye-witnesses to anything which happened before

the calling of the apostles. Who can have reported to the Evangelist the canticles of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon? Here surely we are dealing with legend and poetry, not with historic fact.

Between the narratives of the different Gospels there are discrepancies which baffle the harmonists. Between the narratives of the Resurrection and the events which follow there are discrepancies which drive the harmonists to despair. There are contradictions as to the names of the apostles, the behaviour of the two thieves at the Crucifixion, the attendance at the cross. There is a contradiction with regard to the miracle at Gadara, one Gospel giving a single demoniac, the other a pair. Three Gospels treat Galilee, the fourth Judea, as the chief centre of the ministry. One Gospel gives, another omits, such incidents as the Annunciation, the Adoration of the Magi, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the raising of Lazarus, and the conversation with the woman of Samaria; while the suggestion that the narratives were intended to supplement each

other is gratuitous in itself, and is repelled by the existence of a large common element in the first three. But the most notable discrepancy of all perhaps is that respecting the day of the Crucifixion, and the character of the Last Supper. The first three Gospels make Christ eat the Passover with his disciples and suffer on the day following; the fourth puts the Crucifixion on the day of the Preparation for the Passover, suggesting that Christ was the Paschal Lamb sacrificed for the sins of the world. In the first three Gospels the Last Supper plainly is the Passover; in the fourth it as plainly is not. To force the two accounts into agreement desperate expedients, such as the supposition of a religious meal, not identical with the Passover but identical with the Last Supper, have been tried. But God would scarcely have left inspired narratives of an event on which human salvation was to depend to be reconciled by extreme expedients invented eighteen centuries afterwards by learned and ingenious minds. Unless the two accounts can be reconciled, it is obvious that the

author of one of them can have been no eye-witness nor even well-informed.

It is idle to contend that such discrepancies are of a minor kind and the ordinary variations of human testimony, even on the strange supposition that the Holy Spirit would either lapse into the infirmities of human testimony or simulate them in dictating the Gospel narrative. They are such as would certainly invalidate human testimony to any extraordinary event.

Between the general representation of Christ's character and teaching in the first three Gospels and that in the fourth, there is marked divergence. The teaching in the first three is generally ethical, in the fourth it is theological. The character of Christ in the first is that of a divine teacher; in the fourth it is that of the second Person in the Trinity and the Logos. The fourth Gospel has, indeed, in modern times been preferred to the other three on account of its specially theological character and its spiritual elevation. When we find a similar divergence between the Xenophontic and the

Platonic Socrates, we conclude that the Platonic Socrates is largely the creation of Plato. Testimony is plainly invalidated by the ascendency of imagination.

Sufficient attention seems hardly to have been paid to the adverse weight of negative evidence. A teacher who has been drawing all eyes upon him by his words and by a course of stupendous miracles, culminating in the raising from the dead of a man who had been four days in the grave, enters Jerusalem amidst the acclamations of a vast concourse of people. He is brought before the Sanhedrim and afterwards tried in the most public manner before the Roman governor. The governor's wife is warned about him in a dream. He is crucified, and when he expires miraculous darkness covers the earth for three hours, the earth quakes, the veil of the temple is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the tombs are opened, and bodies of the saints that slept come forth out of the grave, enter into the holy city, and appear to many. The Roman centurion and the watch are impressed, and say that this truly was the Son of God. But other-

wise no impression is made, no notice of these tremendous events seems to be taken, no trace of them is left in general history,[1] no one apparently is converted, not even Saul. The Jews, of whose acts this was an overwhelming condemnation, are so little impressed that they think only of bribing the watch to confess that the body of Jesus had been stolen from the tomb.

We cannot pick and choose. The evidence upon which the miraculous darkness and the apparitions of the dead rest is the same as that upon which all the other miracles rest, and must be accepted or rejected in all the cases alike.

The Acts, like the Gospels, is anonymous, and if its author is identical with the author of the third Gospel, this shows that he was not an eye-witness of the Resurrection. An examination of its internal difficulties

[1] Gibbon, who has not failed to make the point, though he has hardly pushed the argument home, observes that the preternatural darkness happened in the time of Pliny, the naturalist, and of Seneca, who wrote a collection of natural facts in seven books, and is not mentioned by either of them. Pliny, however, would be a boy at that date.

would be beside our present purpose, which is to ascertain the amount and value of the ocular testimony to the miracles. It seems to be admitted that there is no positive and unequivocal evidence of the existence of this book till towards the end of the second century.

Is it conceivable that Providence would allow vital truth, or anything essential to our belief in vital truth, to be stamped with the mark of falsehood? The demoniac miracles are clearly stamped with the mark of Jewish superstition. To the imagination of the Jews at this period, spirits good and evil were everywhere present. They were with you in the lecture-room; they were with you in every function of life. From the fourth Gospel demoniac miracles are absent, not because that Gospel is supplementary, a supposition for which, as was before said, there is no sort of colour, but because the first three Gospels were written for Jewish readers to whom demoniac miracles were congenial, while the fourth Gospel was written for an intellectual circle to which they were not congenial, and perhaps at a later day.

According to Mark, Jesus casts a legion of devils out of a man into a herd of two thousand swine, which forthwith rush down into the sea and are drowned. The comment of an orthodox writer of great eminence upon this astounding and repellent miracle is this: "That the demoniac was healed — that in the terrible final paroxysm which usually accompanied the deliverance from this strange and awful malady, a herd of swine was in some way affected with such wild terror as to rush headlong in large numbers over a steep hillside into the waters of the lake — and that, in the minds of all who were present, including that of the sufferer himself, this precipitate rushing of the swine was connected with the man's release from his demoniac thraldom — thus much is clear."[1] Such attempts to minimize the miracles or reduce them within the compass of possible belief are common in writings of liberal theologians, especially of Germans. In the miracle of the conversion of water into wine at Cana, Olshausen would have us

[1] *The Life of Christ*, by Frederic W. Farrar, I., 337.

suppose that we have only an accelerated operation of nature; Neander, that the water was magnetized; Lange, that the guests were in a state of supernatural exaltation. With regard to the acceleration hypothesis, a critical physicist has remarked that nature alone, whatever time you give her, will never make thirty imperial gallons of wine without at least ten pounds of carbon.

What is hard to believe in the miracle of Bethesda, the liberal theologian escapes by remarking that there is no indication in the narrative that any one who used the water was at once or miraculously healed; that the repeated use of an intermittent and gaseous spring, a character which more than one of the springs about Jerusalem continue to bear to the present day, was, doubtless, likely to produce most beneficial results. He further suggests that it was as much the man's will that was paralyzed as his limbs. Of the troubling of the water by the angel, apologists are glad to be rid by dismissing it as a popular legend, interpolated into the text of St. John. But so long as anything miraculous is left the

difficulty of proof remains; while if nothing miraculous is left there is an end of this discussion. Nor, it must be repeated, can we pick and choose among the miracles, as some are evidently inclined to do. The evidence for the miracle of the demoniac and the swine is just the same as that for any other miracle. All rest upon the same testimony and must stand or fall together.

Jewish belief both in angels and devils is entwined with the history of the first three Gospels; the archangel Gabriel, with a Hebrew name, announces the birth of Christ; angels proclaim it to the shepherds; angels appear again at the tomb of Christ; Satan comes in person to tempt Christ in the wilderness. There are angels in the fourth Gospel, but there is no personal Satan.

From the preface to the third Gospel it appears that many had drawn up narratives concerning the life of Christ. Upon what principle the four were selected by the Church as inspired and authoritative we cannot tell. Irenæus said that as there were four quarters of the world and four chief

winds, the Gospels, which were to be coextensive with the world and to be the breath of life to its inhabitants, must be four. Besides, the Gospel was given by him who sits above the fourfold cherubim, four was the number of the Beasts, and four were God's covenants through Adam, Noah, Moses, and Christ. It is probable that these four narratives survived by their intrinsic merits. But for their authenticity little security can be found in the critical faculty or discernment of the patristic age.

Miraculous Christianity involves anti-scientific ideas of the world. It assumes that the earth is the centre of the universe with the heaven, which is the abode of the Deity, stretched above it, and Hades sunk beneath it. The angels and the mystic dove descend from the skies, and the risen Christ ascends to them. When Satan shows Christ all the kingdoms of the earth from a high mountain, the writer seems to take the globe for a plane. The theological geocentricism, which makes our planet the centre of all interest, the especial care of the Divinity, and the sole

field of divine action, appears in the Johannine doctrine of the Trinity. It might be possible to imagine Deity stooping from a limited heaven to redeem the inhabitants of earth. It would have been hardly possible to imagine a Being who fills eternity and infinity becoming, for the redemption of one speck in the universe, an embryo in the womb of a Jewish maiden. For this stupendous doctrine our principal evidence is the anonymous work of a mystic writer.

The Incarnation, it will be observed, is the centre of this whole circle of miracles. Without it they can be hardly said to have a purpose or a meaning. But since our rejection of the authenticity and authority of the book of Genesis, the purpose and meaning of the Incarnation itself have been withdrawn. If there was no Fall of Man, there can be no need of the Redemption. If there was no need of the Redemption, there can have been no motive for the Incarnation. The whole ecclesiastical scheme of salvation with all its miraculous appurtenances apparently falls to the ground. This is a vital point.

In the story of the Star of the Nativity primitive astronomy and astrology are involved. It is useless to attempt scientific explanations, such as a remarkable conjunction of the planets, or the temporary appearance and sudden extinction of a star. The Magi, as astrologers, recognize the star of Christ; it moves before them as a guide, regardless of the general march of planets or the sidereal system, and stops over the cradle in which the child of destiny lies.

There is one class of the miraculous evidences respecting which we have undoubtedly the means of forming our own judgment. We can tell whether there was really a miraculous fulfilment of Hebrew prophecies in the history of Jesus. To the alleged prophecy that Christ should be called a Nazarene, there is nothing whatsoever corresponding in the Old Testament. Apologists, after trying such expedients as the identification of Nazarene with Nazarite, which even if it were feasible would help them but little, Christ having fulfilled none of the conditions of a Nazarite, are fain to give up

the problem in despair. But once more it must be said that we cannot pick and choose. Our assurance of the miraculous fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy in this and the other cases is the same, while it is impossible to think that the Holy Spirit would either purposely misquote or lapse into involuntary misquotation. In Matthew xxi. 5–7, the supposed fulfilment of the prophecy is founded upon a literary error into which a writer acquainted with Hebrew literature could hardly have fallen. The "ass" and the "colt, the foal of an ass," are in the Hebrew not two things but two expressions for the same thing, and we have before us not only a misconstruction, but, as it is hardly possible that Jesus could have ridden at once upon the ass and upon the foal, a probable adaptation of the history to the fulfilment of the supposed prophecy. The same may be said with regard to the alleged fulfilment of the Scripture in John xix. 24, where the words of the Psalm, "They parted my garment among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots," are taken as denoting two actions,

when they are a double expression, after the manner of Hebrew poetry, for one. "I called my son out of Egypt," as it stands in Hosea xi. 1, can by no ingenuity be referred to anything but the Exodus, not to mention the strong suspicion which here again is raised of a story framed to correspond with the supposed prophecy. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," in Isaiah vii. 14, is evidently a sign given by the prophet in relation to a crisis of contemporary history, and has plainly not the remotest connection with the immaculate conception of Jesus. Messianic predictions, such as "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be," not only were not fulfilled but were contradicted by the history of Jesus, who was not a temporal ruler or deliverer, and was therefore not recognized as the Messiah by the Jews. None in short of the so-called prophecies will be found to be more than applications, and many of them as applications are far fetched. This is true

even of the most remarkable of the number, the description of the oppressed and sorrowing servant of Jehovah, in Isaiah liii. 3, the author of which cannot be said to have distinctly foretold anything in the history of Jesus, even if we take Jesus to have been so preëminently a man of sorrows, a point on which a word will be presently said. In no single case can Jesus, or any event of his life, be said to have been present to the mental eye of the prophet. In fact, divines of the more rationalistic school are retiring from the ground of miraculous prophecy to that of ethical application, a movement parallel to that which they are performing in the case of the miracles by substituting natural causes, as far as they can, for divine interruption of the course of nature. But applications, even if they are apposite, are not prophecies. A similar set might probably be framed for almost any marked character of history in a nation possessed of an ancient literature. On this question, as on that of miracles, orthodoxy retreats, covering its movement with language which,

while it renounces inspiration, clings without any definite reason to the belief in something which is not human but divine.

The martyrdoms of the apostles, it has been said, are testimony of the miracles, since without the assurance of the miracles the pains of martyrdom would not have been faced. This history contradicts. To say nothing of the persecutions endured under Nero and Diocletian, when belief in miracles still lived, we have instances in abundance at the time of the Reformation of martyrdom undergone for the doctrine of the reformers, though no miracles were even alleged to have taken place. Nor are such cases confined to the Christian pale. The sect of the Babis in Persia has in recent times undergone the most cruel persecution, not only without the support of miracles but for a faith which Christians pronounce false. Servetus died for Socinianism, and Giordano Bruno for scepticism. St. Paul endured a life of martyrdom, but evidently it was for love of Christ and for the faith. That Christ had risen was an essential part of his faith, and it is in this

aspect, rather than as a confirmatory miracle, that it presents itself to the mind of Paul.

No man of comprehensive mind, unless it be Renan in his dealing with the raising of Lazarus, has taken the miracles for creations of fraud. They are the offspring of a child-like fancy in a totally uncritical age. They are a halo which naturally grew round the head of the adored Teacher and Founder, as it grew round the head of every mediæval saint. That world teemed with miracle, both divine and diabolical. Jesus himself is represented as recognizing miracles of both kinds. He challenges his opponents to say, if he by Beelzebub casts out devils, by whom do their sons cast them out. Instead of a disposition to criticise, there was a dominant predisposition to accept. If in the country of Descartes highly educated men could believe in the miracles wrought at the tomb of the saintly Deacon Pâris, how much more easily could Galilean peasants, or simple-minded disciples of whatever race, believe in the miracles ascribed, perhaps long after his death, to Jesus? Dr. Arnold asked

whether it was possible that there should be myths in the age of Tacitus. The age of Tacitus it was, but not the country; though even in the country of Tacitus miraculous signs attended the births or deaths of Cæsars, and Tacitus himself records miracles reported to have been performed by Vespasian, in which, however, nobody believes. The Jews were further prepared for the acceptance of fresh miracles by their traditional acceptance of those of the Old Testament. So devoid were they of any conception of natural law, or of anything except a direct action of Deity, that with them a miracle would hardly be miraculous.

If we must resign the miracles, the Messianic prophecies with their supposed fulfilment in Christ, and the Trinitarian creed, what remains to us of the Gospel? There remain to us the Character, the sayings, and the parables, which made and have sustained moral, though not ritualistic, dogmatic, or persecuting, Christendom. There remain the supremacy of conscience over law and the recognition of motive as that which

determines the quality of action. The character is only impaired as the model and guiding star of humanity by supposing that it was preterhuman. We cannot even conceive the union of two natures, divine and human, though we may mechanically repeat the form of words. The sayings of Christ would be not less true or applicable if they had been cast ashore by the tide of time without anything to designate their source. The parable of the prodigal son, that of the labourers in the vineyard, or that of the Good Samaritan, would touch our hearts whoever might be deemed their author. There remains, moreover, the ethical beauty of the Gospels themselves, unapproachable after its kind. Their miracles are miracles of mercy, not of destruction, like many of the miracles of the Old Testament. When James and John propose to perform an Old Testament miracle by commanding fire to come down from heaven and destroy an inhospitable village, they are rebuked and told they know not of what manner of spirit they are. In this sense it may be said that the mira-

cles confirm the Gospel and the Gospel confirms the miracles. The Inquisition, to justify its existence, could find among Christ's words none more apposite than "Compel them to come in," said by the giver of the feast in the parable. The halo of miracle is worthy of the figure. If there is a Supreme Being, and if he is anywhere manifest in human history, it is here.

A biography of Christ there cannot be. There are no genuine materials for it, as Strauss truly says. Four compilations of legend cannot be pieced together so as to make the history of a life. No ingenuity can produce a chronological sequence of scene such as a biographer requires. The "Lives," so called, are merely the four Gospels cut into shreds, which are forced into some sort of order, while, to impart to the narrative an air of reality, it is profusely decked out with references to local scenery, allusions to national customs, and Hebrew names. Each biographer gives us a Christ according to his own prepossessions; Roman Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, or

Rationalist. The Roman Catholic priest presents him as a living crucifix; the New York minister as a divine preacher. Renan's *Life of Jesus*, though it is exquisite as a work of literary art, as a biography is worth no more than the rest. It has no critical basis, and the facts are arbitrarily selected and arranged in virtue of a learned insight which Renan supposes himself to possess. Nothing is more arbitrary than the selection of the raising of Lazarus as an example of pious fraud. Nor does Renan's work escape the idiosyncrasy of the writer. We find in it a touch of sentimentality, or even of something verging on the sensuous, which bespeaks a Parisian hand.

Did Jesus give himself out or allow his followers to designate him as the Messiah? It is impossible to tell. All that we can say is that his disciples, and not only those whose traditions are embodied in the first Gospel, desired to identify him with the hope of Israel and applied or wrested passages of the Old Testament to that intent. With that object evidently were produced, by two

different hands, the two genealogies, which hopelessly diverge from each other, while one of them, by arbitrary erasion, forces the pedigree into three mystic sections of fourteen each; a clear proof that it was not taken from any public record, even if we could suppose it possible that amid all the convulsions of Judea the record of a peasant's pedigree had been preserved. One of the genealogies, moreover, includes the mythical line of patriarchs between Adam and Abraham. The Messiahship of Jesus is a question with which we need practically concern ourselves no more. The Messiah was a dream of the tribal pride of the Jew, to which, as to other creations of tribal or national pride or fancy, we may bid a long farewell. That it should be necessary for the redeemer of the Jewish race to trace his pedigree to a hero so dear to the national heart, though morally so questionable, as David, was natural enough; but who can believe that this was necessary for the Redeemer of mankind? It is rather lamentable to think how much study and thought have

been wasted in the attempt to establish the fulfilment of a Hebrew vision, devoid of importance or interest for the rest of the human race.

What was the relation of Christ to Judaism? His culture manifestly was Jewish; he accepted the sacred books of the nation, treating the book of Daniel as authentic and the story of Jonah as history; he taught in the synagogues; he fulfilled all righteousness by his observance of the ceremonial law. He was a reformer and a regenerator, not a revolutionist. It can hardly be doubted that he was of pure Jewish race, though the population of Galilee was very mixed and was, on that account, despised by the blue blood of Jerusalem, while the fabrication of genealogies seems rather to indicate some misgivings on this point. Here, again, we are perplexed by the discrepancies among the authorities, if authorities they can be called. In some places Christ is made to represent himself as being sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; as coming not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it and to establish every

jot and tittle of it for ever; as regarding all outside the pale of Judaism in the light of dogs, worthy only to eat of the crumbs under the Judaic table; as forbidding his apostles to enter any city of the Gentiles or Samaritans. Elsewhere he selects a Samaritan in contrast to the self-righteous Jew as a type of charity, praises the faith of a heathen soldier as greater than any found in Israel, and chooses the Samaritan woman as the recipient of his highest and most memorable utterance concerning the nature of religion, while the parables of the prodigal son and the labourers in the vineyard seem also symbolically to suggest the conversion and admission of the Gentiles. The writer of the first Gospel evidently draws one way; the writer of the fourth, who betrays a positive antipathy to the Jews, the other. What is certain is that practically Jesus put conscience above the law, even above the law of the Decalogue; and in place of the tribal and half-local religion of the Jew introduced the religion of humanity. For this Judaism rejected him, crucified him, and itself, sink-

ing deeper than ever into its tribalism and legalism, remained the enemy of his religion and of his brotherhood of man. In the Pauline Epistles we see Christianity detaching itself by a painful effort from Judaism; and we willingly believe that Paul is right in holding that the genuine tradition of Jesus is on the side of emancipation.

Did Jesus regard himself or allow himself to be regarded as God? Unitarians quote strong texts to the contrary. The Trinitarians get their texts chiefly from the fourth Gospel, which is manifestly imbued with the peculiar views of its writer and his circle. In fact, it may be said to be one note of the comparatively late composition of that Gospel, that time must have elapsed sufficient for the Teacher of Galilee to become, first divine, and then the Second Person of the Trinity and the Alexandrian Logos. It seems unlikely that even in those days of theosophic reverie the author of the sayings and the parables should ever have been led by spiritual exaltation or by the adoring love of his disciples to form and promulgate such

a conception of himself. At any rate, we have done with the Alexandrian Logos, as well as with the paradoxes of the Athanasian Creed.

We have done, too, for ever with the mixture of Rabbinism and Alexandrian theosophy, with which St. Paul has been accused of overlaying the Christian faith. We may bid farewell to his doctrine of the Atonement. That doctrine is bound up with the belief in the fall of Adam, and the fall of Adam is now abandoned as a fact even by orthodox theologians, though they would fain substitute for it some lapse of the human race from a more perfect state, without any proof either of the more perfect state or of the lapse. As was said before, if there was no Fall, there was no need of an Atonement; if no need of an Atonement, there was no need of an Incarnation; and that whole cycle of dogma apparently falls to the ground.

In calling himself the Son of Man Jesus might seem to identify himself with a mystic figure in Daniel; but the Son of Man is not the Son of God, nor is it the Son of a Jew; it is a title of humanity.

From such ethical limitations and peculiarities as cling to the characters and teaching of philosophers of Athens and Roman Stoics, the character and teaching of Jesus are essentially free. There is no brand of nationality or race to interfere with our acceptance of him as pattern and model of humanity. His limitations are those of a peasant of Galilee seeing nothing of modern and complex civilization. For Jesus politics had no existence; at least, the only political relation known to him was that of provincial subjection to the military empire of Rome, so that all political questions were perfectly solved for him when he had said, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." He saw little of commerce; if he ever looked on Tyre and Sidon it was from afar; trade, as it showed itself in the money-changers and salesmen of the temple, was revolting to him; from the magnificent buildings of the capital his simplicity seems to have recoiled. Art Judea had not, but to art he would probably have been in-

different. To his eye the lily of the field was more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory, and would have been more beautiful than the work of Phidias. Wealth appeared to him only in the guise of Dives with Lazarus lying at his gate, not in its more beneficent form; and therefore to him wealth seemed in itself unblest and poverty in itself blest. His benign influence has been mainly over the individual heart and in the simple relations of life. Over politics, commerce, the great world, and civilization generally his influence, notwithstanding national professions and state churches, has been far less. The pursuit of wealth has been eager among the professed disciples of him who preached the Sermon upon the Mount, and in the temples of the Prince of Peace have been hung up the trophies of war. The morality of civil, commercial, and social life has, perhaps, rather suffered by the formal profession of an unattainable standard, and the world has been more evil than it might have been if the ideal of good men had not been withdrawal from an evil

world. Among the teachings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, learning, literature, and science have no place. To the mind of Jesus, had they presented themselves, they would probably have seemed entirely alien. The simplicity of the child and the spiritual insight of poverty were in his eyes superior to the wisdom of the wise. In this respect his thoroughgoing disciples have generally reflected the image of their Master. What would St. Francis of Assisi have made of European civilization? Other limitations of Jesus were his estrangement from domestic life with its relations, and the curtailment of his experience by an early death.

To one of low estate in a province oppressed by foreign rule, full of misery and leprosy, it might well seem that this world was evil and the only chance of happiness for man was by escaping from it to a better. There can be no doubt that the pessimist has a right to say that the Gospel is with him so far as the present world is concerned.

Allowance must be made also for Oriental

hyperbole. Over-carefulness poisons life; but if we literally cared not for the things of to-morrow, we and our families should starve. The sparrows do not look to Providence to feed them; they search for food the livelong day themselves. Forgiveness is the general principle which even self-interest prescribes; but if we were to offer the other cheek to the smiter, the other cheek would too often be smitten; and if we were to forgive all wrong-doers until seventy times seven, wrong would fill the world. To the brotherhood of men there is a rational limit. In our relations to each other, if there is something that is fraternal, there is something that is not. Competition and antagonism are normal facts. The practical truth lies somewhere between the view of Hobbes and that of the Gospel, though with a recognition of the Gospel view as the ideal. Justice, with her scales and her sword, will keep her place as well as love or the enthusiasm of humanity. If the aggressor tries to take away your coat, you will have, instead of giving him your cloak

also, to withstand his aggression in the court of law or by force. It would be bad for him as well as for you if you did not.

Of the intolerance, persecutions, and religious wars which have resulted from dogmatism, on the other hand, the true Jesus is blameless. If anything like narrowness or intolerance is thrust upon him by a dogmatic narrator, his own character and the general scope of his teaching repel it. His genuine teaching clearly was ethical and spiritual, not dogmatic. Nor to him can be fairly ascribed asceticism, eremitism, the false idea of saintship as seclusion and self-torture, or the hideous array of hospital pathos embodying that idea which fills the galleries of mediæval art. His ministry commences at a marriage feast and his enemies reproach him with not being ascetic. In his character and history there is no doubt a large element of sorrow, without which he would not have touched humanity. Yet we think too much of Jerusalem and of the closing scene with its agonies, its horrors, and the circle of dark, even of dreadful, dogma which has been formed

around it. We think too little of the preaching of the Word of life, and of the land in which the Word of life was preached. Let us sometimes draw a veil over the Cross, banish from our imaginations Jerusalem and its temple reeking with bloody sacrifice, its fanatical Judaism, its hypocritical Pharisaism, its throng of bigots yelling for a judicial murder. Let us learn to see the great Teacher of humanity in the happy days of his mission, while he gathers round him the circle of loving disciples and of simple hearts thirsting for the waters of life, in the village synagogue, on the summer hillside or lake shore, amidst the vines and oleanders and lilies of Galilee.

MORALITY AND THEISM

MORALITY AND THEISM

Mr. Leslie Stephen, at the conclusion of his *Science of Ethics*, admits, with his usual candour and courage, that one great difficulty remains not only unsolved but insoluble. "There is," he says, "no absolute coincidence between virtue and happiness. I cannot prove that it is always prudent to act rightly or that it is always happiest to be virtuous." In another passage he avows that in accepting the altruist theory he accepts, as inseparable from it, the conclusion that "the path of duty does not coincide with the path of happiness"; and he compares the attempt to establish an absolute coincidence to an attempt to square the circle or discover perpetual motion. In another passage he puts the same thing in a concrete form. "The virtuous men," he says, "may be the

very salt of the earth, and yet the discharge of a function socially necessary may involve their own misery." "A great moral and religious teacher," he adds, "has often been a martyr, and we are certainly not entitled to assume either that he was a fool for his pains or, on the other hand, that the highest conceivable degree of virtue can make martyrdom agreeable." We may doubt, in his opinion, whether it answers to be a moral hero. "In a gross society, where the temperate man is an object of ridicule and necessarily cut off from participation in the ordinary pleasures of life, he may find his moral squeamishness conducive to misery; the just and honourable man is made miserable in a corrupt society where the social combinations are simply bands of thieves, and his high spirit only awakens hatred; and the benevolent is tortured in proportion to the strength of his sympathies in a society where they meet with no return, and where he has to witness cruelty triumphant and mercy ridiculed as weakness." So that not only are men exposed to misery by reason of

their superiority, but "every reformer who breaks with the world, though for the world's good, must naturally expect much pain and must be often tempted to think that peace and harmony are worth buying, even at the price of condoning evil." "'Be good if you would be happy' seems to be the verdict even of worldly prudence; but it adds, in an emphatic aside, 'Be not too good.'" Of a moral hero it is said, that "it may be true both that a less honourable man would have had a happier life, and that a temporary fall below the highest strain of heroism would have secured for him a greater chance of happiness." Had he given way, "he might have made the discovery — not a very rare one — that remorse is among the passions most easily lived down." Mr. Stephen fully recognizes the existence of men "capable of intense pleasure from purely sensual gratification, and incapable of really enjoying any of the pleasures which imply public spirit, or private affection, or vivid imagination"; and he confesses that with regard to such men the moralist has no leverage whatever.

The physician has leverage; so has the policeman; but it is possible, as Mr. Stephen would probably admit, to indulge not only covetousness but lust at great cost to others without injury to your own health, and without falling into the clutches of the law.

The inference from Mr. Stephen's admission seems to be that duty is a theistic term. The same may be said of its synonyms, moral obligation and moral law. We cannot tell whether they are binding on reason unless we know whether there is a God or some superior power to impose the law, bestow the reward, and enforce the penalty. We may extend the statement to perfect happiness, which, as a state distinct from pleasure, seems to imply a guarantee superior to the accidents, and a duration uncurtailed by the brevity, of mortal life.

With every man his own interest must be paramount, and every man's interest is the fulfilment of his strongest desires. As a general rule, our desires, seeing that we are domestic and social as well as individual, may lead us to promote the good of the

family and of society. But this is not invariably the case, and when it is not the case, supposing that there is no God to fix his canon against evil-doing, what is there to withhold a man from gratifying his desires at the expense of society, or to make his gratification criminal? Napoleon avowed that he deliberately excluded from his mind thoughts about any world but this, and that had he not done so he could not have achieved great things. Of the great things which he did achieve, his agnosticism was unquestionably a condition. But of the great things which the Antonines and other Roman Stoics achieved, the condition was not less unquestionably the ascendancy of thoughts which Napoleon excluded. It was not in their case a definite religious belief, but it was a belief in a power of righteousness and in an assured reward of virtue. Observe, too, that Napoleon found it necessary, in the interest of political and social order, to restore religion.

"Virtue is the doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God and for the sake of everlasting happiness." So says

Paley, speaking with his usual directness. He omits to note those social and domestic desires and necessities of our nature which, in themselves, move us to do good to mankind as well for the pleasure of doing good as for the hope that good will be done to us in turn. Yet it seems impossible to doubt that morality, personal and social, but especially social, has hitherto largely rested, in ordinary minds, on a foundation of religious belief, including the belief in another life and in future rewards and punishments. That foundation is now manifestly giving way. Literature teems with the proofs of this. So does the conversation of the educated classes. So does even apologetic theology, the attitude of which is generally one of concession and retreat, while among large bodies of quick-witted mechanics, even in England, still more in France and other countries, scepticism is undisguised and blunt, in France going the length even of a comic Life of Christ. It is natural to fear that unless a substitute for religion can, within a measurable time, be found, a

period of some moral confusion will ensue. Philosophers, of course, will be kept right, not only by their philosophy, but by the character which dedication to philosophy implies. Nobody expects that they will fall to committing murder or adultery; although the writer, as he believes, may himself say that he has witnessed the case of a highly educated mind to which the leap from theism to agnosticism proved morally fatal. It is not likely that there will be any sudden catastrophe. Society will not fall to pieces. It will be held together by the necessity of labour, of order, of mutual help and forbearance, by the domestic and social affections, by opinion, by the law and the police. It has, in fact, been held together, after a certain fashion, in China by these forces with little aid from religion. But it does not follow that, pending the reparation of the basis, society may not undergo a bad quarter of an hour, especially if, in the absence of spiritual aims and of any hopes beyond this world, a passionate thirst for pleasure, and for the means of obtaining it, should prevail.

A moral interregnum of this kind there actually was between the decline of mediæval Catholicism and the installation of Protestantism or reformed Catholicism in its place. To that interregnum belong the Borgias, the Visconti, Machiavel, and Catherine de Medicis. The chief of Christendom glories in the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and even the court of England thinks so lightly of it as to continue negotiating with Catherine de Medici for a marriage between the queen of England and one of Catherine's sons. The present vogue of ethical heterodoxy under the guise of works of fiction, among other things, is surely a symptom of ethical disintegration.

Benjamin Franklin, describing the effects of scepticism on himself and young men of his time, says that with religion morality gave way at once, even to common honesty and common decency, and that it was only after much reflection that he began to suspect that wrong was not wrong because it was forbidden, but that it was forbidden because it was wrong. It is true this was in the eighteenth century, and the same effect

would not be produced on a Franklin now. But the masses are not Franklins. They are not as capable of reflection now as Franklin was in his time, and while they are coming up to his level the world may have that bad quarter of an hour.

Even in countries where there is no state church, society is still largely organized in the form of churches. Philanthropy works to a great extent through the churches, and so, in some measure, does education. The social shock occasioned by the departure of religion would, therefore, in itself be severe. It is probably the apprehension of this and of the social and political consequences of atheism, not less than the influence of habit on fashion, that leads some, who themselves believe no longer, to support the church. Even pronounced Positivists have been known to give money for this purpose. There is no saying, indeed, how much of the apparent church-going and contribution to church offertories may be merely politic, or how hollow the crust of profession may be. But taking the lowest reasonable estimate of religious

influence, what a void would the departure of religion and the closing of the churches leave in life!

Again, what is to become of the clergy? Here is a great body of the very flower of our morality, as well as of our culture, committed to a calling the existence of which is bound up, so far as we can see, certainly with theism, if not with supernatural religion. Supposing religion to fail, what would the clergy do? Would they transform themselves into teachers of ethics and social guides? Would they starve? Would some of them be drawn into revolution and thus add to the seething elements of disturbance? A celibate priest is well prepared for adventure, and he may hope, however vainly, by throwing himself into a social revolution to found his authority anew. Clergymen read and think. Must not the mental state of some of them already be uneasy? Is not Ritualism itself in some cases the veil of doubt?

We talk of the moral law, and repeat the famous saying of Kant that the two things the contemplation of which filled his soul

with awe, were the moral law and the starry heavens. This implies that the moral law is one, and that, with the order of the heavens, it is upheld by a power above us. What power is there above us if there is no God or we have no proof of his existence? What is the moral law? There are certain rules of conduct which we must observe in order to maintain our health, bodily and mental, to keep our affections pure and warm, and to enable us to earn our bread. There are other rules which we must observe in order to secure our domestic happiness. There are also rules which we must observe in order to secure our welfare as members of society, of the commonwealth, of the race. These rules play into each other, the preservation of our health, for example, being essential to our right temper and effective action in all the fields; but they are apparently no more one or capable of being represented as a self-existing authority transcending all individual interests, than our care for our own comfort in travelling is capable of being represented as one with our necessary respect for the

comfort of our fellow-travellers. The rudiments of morality have been shown to exist in animals, which are as little conscious of Kant's moral law as they are of the grandeur which fills his soul with awe when he gazes on the starry heavens.

Evolution clearly is not moral. There is nothing moral in the struggle for existence or in natural selection. This bold evolutionists, such as Haeckel, frankly admit. An organism does not regulate its own stage of evolution, nor does it select itself or endow itself with the strength which will enable it to triumph in the struggle for existence. It is not answerable for its own propensities, which may be those of a philanthropist or those of an assassin; of a human being or of a tiger. If it survives in the struggle for existence its survival must be that of the fittest, and therefore its sufficient justification. The ultimate tendency of things may be against it, as it is against the propensities of tigers, those of the human tiger perhaps, as well as those of the tiger of the jungle. But this does not make it the duty

of the offensive organism to coöperate in its own elimination or to refrain from gratifying its natural propensities while it exists.

So far as social morality depends on the sanctity of human life or of humanity generally, it can hardly fail to be somewhat threatened by evolution, which levels men in point of origin, and, as some have begun to believe, in point of destiny with other animals. A German physiologist of the extreme evolutionary school said to Agassiz that the kingdom of science would have really come when you could go out and shoot a man for the purpose of dissection. "Of course," replied Agassiz, "you will take a fine specimen, a Goethe or a Von Humboldt." We have still, no doubt, the same tribal interest in safeguarding our own species, and this will lead us to hang the murderer when we catch him. But the murderer who by his cunning escapes the gallows, and perhaps comes into the enjoyment of wealth out of which the life which he has taken would have kept him, — why should he feel any more remorse than he would have felt if he

had taken the life of a dog? Let us suppose, for instance, that the life of a child stands between a needy man and a great estate; that he puts an end to the child's life in such a way as to escape detection, enters into the estate, lives a life of ease and affluence instead of struggling for bread, spends his money well and enjoys the goodwill of the people among whom he lives; why is he to feel remorse, or, if he has a twinge of it, why is he not to repress it as he would any other unpleasant emotion or bodily pain?

We speak of the brotherhood of man as our great security for mutual benevolence and our high inducement to virtuous effort. But is it an absolute certainty that men are brothers? Has science pronounced decisively in favour of the unity of the race? Some men of science certainly have pronounced on the other side. Again, does not brotherhood imply a common paternity, and where is the common paternity unless we have all a father in God? If that idea is set aside, are we not as much competitors as brothers?

If we make of pleasure our ethical criterion, how are we to distinguish between one kind of pleasure and another, between the pleasure of eating the bread which is honestly earned and the pleasure of eating the bread which is stolen? Those who select as an instance of ethical perfection the reciprocal pleasure enjoyed by a mother and the child at her breast, must exclude from their idea of perfection anything that we should commonly call moral, since there is nothing in the suckling of a human infant more moral than in the suckling of a calf.

Perfect adaptation, again, would appear to fail as an ethical criterion or sanction. Adaptation may be, and often is, as perfect in the case of means adopted to do ill deeds as in the case of means adopted to do good deeds. Punctuality, which is selected as an instance of adaptation, and on that account moral, is shown as much in keeping a criminal assignation as in keeping an appointment for the best of objects.

The satisfaction of coöperating with the motive power of evolution is tendered as an

ethical inducement. It would hardly present itself so to beings the elimination of whom is a part of the process. Why should a mortal sacrifice his enjoyments to the tendencies, blind tendencies as far as we know, of a soulless power or of a power which to us manifests no soul? If the process is, as an evolutionary philosopher represents it, one of alternating creation and destruction, Prometheus might find satisfaction rather in stopping the process at the recommencement of its destructive part than in devout coöperation.

The authors of systems of moral philosophy have sought to discover some intellectual principle from which all moral rules could be logically deduced and the apprehension of which would constrain all men to be moral. But the question remains, why men who do not like to be moral, as many men do not, are to sacrifice their propensities to a logical deduction from an intellectual principle. Suppose virtue to correspond, as Clarke says, to the fitness of things, why is Borgia to prefer the fitness of things to the enjoyment

of his orgies and to the criminal courses by which the means of that enjoyment are to be obtained? What is needed to influence the actions of men is not an abstract principle or a definition, but a motive. It is by renewing and reinforcing the motive power, not by defining morality, that the great moral reforms and movements have been made. Desire of health, of domestic happiness, of the esteem and good-will of our fellows, of the security for our lives and property which we must purchase by reciprocal respect for the lives and property of others, and by obedience to the laws, are motive powers. The necessity of obeying the will of God, with eternal reward or punishment annexed, on which Paley founds the inducement to virtue, provided the truth of theism can be proved, is a motive power of the most overwhelming kind. Intellectual perception of the fitness of things is not.

Systems of ethics founded on the moral taste fail in the same way. They cannot show any obligation to have the taste, or, in its absence, to conform to the peculiarity of those who have it.

Butler's ethics are founded on the system of man's inward frame and the supremacy of conscience, which he takes to be manifest, in that system. "Appetites, passions, affections, and the principle of reflection," he says, "considered merely as the several parts of our inward nature, do not at all give us an idea of the system or constitution of this nature; because the constitution is formed by a somewhat not yet taken into consideration, namely, by the relations which these several parts have to each other, the chief of which is the authority of reflection or conscience." Conscience, he says, if it had power as it has authority, would rule the world. Whence, then, its lack of power? Butler manifestly assumes that man's inward frame is regulated by divine ordinance, and that conscience is the voice of God. Unless it be the voice of God, it is nothing more than an index, formed by experience and ratified by tradition, to the course of individual action which is best for the community and the race. If a man cares nothing for the community or the race, with him con-

science can have no authority. Such a man will have nothing within him to restrain him from sacrificing the happiness and lives of other men without measure to the promotion of his own interest or the gratification of his passions. His only restraints, and the only restraints of thoroughly selfish men in general, will be social influence and, in the last resort, the penal law. Social influence will be strong in proportion as society is well compacted and as the man is by nature sensitive to opinion and to the advantages of kindly relations with his fellows. Beyond this there remains, to control the wicked, nothing but the penal law, and the penal law may be evaded; cupidity and passion will, at least, often hope to evade it; while a man of Napoleon's genius and fortunes may raise himself entirely above it, as well as above the pressure of opinion, and run, without fear of punishment, a career of slaughter and robbery on the most gigantic scale. If he ever feels a twinge of remorse, arising from early lessons or the force of habit, there seems to be no assignable reason

why he should not stifle it just as he would assuage any bodily ache or pain.

In such action as is heroic, or involves great sacrifice of self, especially, there appears to be an element hardly separable from theism, whatever allowance we may make for the warmth of social feeling and what has been called the enthusiasm of humanity. Anything short of life perhaps we can imagine a man would sacrifice from his love of his fellows and in the hope of winning their love; but the sacrifice of life seems to imply the existence of a hope beyond. One philosopher has even found theism in the devotion of the private soldier who is content, with almost as little expectation of individual glory as of profit, to give his life to the common cause.

A great evolutionist deduced from evolution the negation of free will and the automatism of man. The discovery would have been an end of anything that could properly be called morality. The deduction, however, supposing it logical, would be fatal surely, not to free will, but to evolution.

That man has power over his own actions, however limited or qualified that power may be, and by whatever name you may choose to call it, with the responsibility attendant, is surely a fact of human nature no less undeniable than the existence of any one of our bodily senses. We may puzzle ourselves over it without end, but no one ever practically denies it either in his reflections on his own actions or in forming his opinion on the actions of his neighbours. The whole course of life, of society, of law, and of government, implies it. Its presence has hitherto repelled the attempt to construct a science of history analogous to the physical sciences. If anybody has ever persuaded himself, nobody has ever acted on the persuasion, that the relation of the inducement to the action, in him or in his neighbours, is as the impact of one billiard ball on the other. The feeling of free will, indeed, may be roughly described as our sense, given us by consciousness, of the difference between physical and moral causation.

Mr. Cotter Morison, a man himself of

moral sensibility as well as the highest cultivation, said that the sooner the idea of moral responsibility was got rid of the better it would be for society and moral education, and that while virtue might, and possibly would, bring happiness to the virtuous man, to the immoral and the selfish virtue would probably be the most distasteful or even painful thing in their experience, while vice would give them unmitigated pleasure.[1] His method of moral reform is the elimination or suppression of the bad. But if the bad happen to be the stronger or the more cunning, what is to prevent their eliminating or suppressing the good? What is to prevent their doing this, not only with a clear conscience, but with a glow of self-approbation?

The author of *Modern Thinkers*, bravely pushing agnostic principles to their extreme conclusion, says: —

"It is generally believed to be moral to tell the truth, and immoral to lie. And yet it would be difficult to prove that nature prefers the true to the false. Every-

[1] See *The Service of Man*, by James Cotter Morison, pp. 293-314.

where she makes the false impression first, and only after years, or thousands of years, do we become able to detect her in her lies. . . . Nature endows almost every animal with the faculty of deceit in order to aid it in escaping from the brute force of its superiors. Why, then, should not man be endowed with the faculty of lying when it is to his interest to appear wise concerning matters of which he is ignorant? Lying is often a refuge to the weak, a stepping-stone to power, a ground of reverence toward those who live by getting credit for knowing what they do not know. No one doubts that it is right for the maternal partridge to feign lameness, a broken wing or leg, in order to conceal her young in flight, by causing the pursuer to suppose he can more easily catch her than her offspring. From whence, then, in nature, do we derive the fact that a human being may not properly tell an untruth with the same motive? Our early histories, sciences, poetries, and theologies are all false, yet they comprehend by far the major part of human thought. Priesthoods have ruled the world by deceiving our tender souls, and yet they command our most enduring reverence. Where, then, do we discover that any law of universal nature prefers truth to falsehood, any more than oxygen to nitrogen, or alkalies to salts? So habituated have we become to assume that truth-telling is a virtue, that nothing is more difficult then to tell how we came to assume it, nor is it easy of proof that it is a virtue in an unrestricted sense. What would be thought of the military strategist who made no feints, of the advertisement that contained no lie, of the business man whose polite suavity covered no falsehood?

"Inasmuch as all moral rules are in the first instance impressed by the strong, the dominant, the matured, and the successful upon the weak, the crouching, the infantile, and the servile, it would not be strange if a close analysis and a minute historical research should concur in proving that all moral rules are doctrines established by the strong for the government of the weak. It is invariably the strong who require the weak to tell the truth, and always to promote some interest of the strong. . . .

"'Thou shalt not steal' is a moral precept invented by the strong, the matured, the successful, and by them impressed upon the weak, the infantile, and the failures in life's struggle, as all criminals are. For nowhere in the world has the sign ever been blazoned on the shop doors of a successful business man, 'Closed because the proprietor prefers crime to industry.' Universal society might be pictured, for the illustration of this feature of the moral code, as consisting of two sets of swine, one of which is in the clover, and the other is out. The swine that are in the clover grunt, 'Thou shalt not steal; put up the bars.' The swine that are out of the clover grunt, 'Did you make the clover? let down the bars.' 'Thou shalt not steal' is a maxim impressed by property holders upon non-property holders. It is not only conceivable, but it is absolute verity, that a sufficient deprivation of property, and force, and delicacy of temptation, would compel every one who utters it to steal, if he could get an opportunity. In a philosophic sense, therefore, it is not a universal, but a class, law; its prevalence and obedience indicate that the property holders rule society, which is itself an index of advance toward civilization. No one would say that if a lion lay gorged with his ex-

cessive feast amidst the scattered carcass of a deer, and a jaguar or a hyena stealthily bore away a haunch thereof, the act of the hyena was less virtuous than that of the lion. How does the case of two bushmen, between whom the same incident occurs, differ from that of the two quadrupeds? Each is doing that which tends in the highest degree to his own preservation, and it may be assumed that the party against whom the spoliation is committed is not injured at all by it. Among many savage tribes theft is taught as a virtue, and detection is punished as a crime. . . . Having control of the forces of society, the strong can always legislate, or order, or wheedle, or preach, or assume other people's money and land out of their possession into their own, by methods which are not known as stealing, since instead of violating the law they inspire and create the law. But if the under dog in the social fight runs away with a bone in violation of superior force, the top dog runs after him bellowing, 'Thou shalt not steal,' and all the other top dogs unite in bellowing, 'This is divine law and not dog law'; the verdict of the top dog, so far as law, religion, and other forms of brute force are concerned, settles the question. But philosophy will see in this contest of antagonistic forces, a mere play of opposing elements, in which larceny is an incident of social weakness and unfitness to survive, just as debility and leprosy are; and would as soon assume a divine command, 'Thou shalt not break out in boils and sores,' to the weakling or leper, as one of 'Thou shalt not steal' to the failing struggler for subsistence. So far as the irresistible promptings of nature may be said to constitute a divine law, there are really two laws. The law to him

who will be injured by stealing is, 'Thou shalt not steal,' meaning thereby, 'Thou shalt not suffer another to steal from you.' The law to him who cannot survive without stealing is simply, 'Thou shalt, in stealing, avoid being detected.'

"So the laws forbidding unchastity were framed by those who, in the earlier periods of civilization, could afford to own women, for the protection of their property rights in them, against the poor who could not. . . . We do not mean, by this course of reasoning, to imply that the strong in society can, or ought to be, governed by the weak: that is neither possible, nor, if possible, would it be any improvement. We only assert that moral precepts are largely the selfish maxims expressive of the will of the ruling forces in society, those who have health, wealth, knowledge, and power, and are designed wholly for their own protection and the maintenance of their power. They represent the view of the winning side, in the struggle for subsistence, while the true interior law of nature would represent a varying combat in which two laws would appear, viz.: that known as the moral or majority law, and that known as the immoral or minority law, which commands a violation of the other."[1]

Happily, the strong and the weak are not two distinct sets of men. They are blended together in society, by the common interests and general opinion of which the strong in the exercise of their strength are practically

[1] *Modern Thinkers*, by Van Buren Denslow, pp. 240–246.

controlled. Men who are strong in one way are very often weak in others; men who are weak in one way are strong in others; and there are innumerable gradations of every kind of strength.

This, however, is free thought expressed with a vigour and frankness for which inquirers after truth will be thankful. It is curious, as an indication of the tendencies of the philosophy to which it relates, and as a reply to the historical scepticism which refuses to believe that the teaching of the Sophists really was what it is represented to have been by Socrates or Plato. It would also seem to be a conclusive answer to those who utterly deride the apprehension of a moral interregnum, and feel confident that society is going to sail, without interruption or disturbance of its rule of conduct, out of the zone of theistic into that of scientific morality. It suggests that between one state and the other there may be an interval in which the question will be not so much between the moral and the immoral, as between the "top and the under dog."

The Marquis of Steyne is an organism, and, like all other organisms, so long as he succeeds in maintaining himself against competing organisms, is able to make good his title to existence under the law of natural selection. He has his pleasures; they are not those of a St. Paul, or a Shakespeare, or a Wilberforce, but they are his. They make him happy, according to the only measure of happiness which he can conceive; and if he is cautious, as a sagacious voluptuary will be, they need not diminish his vitality, they may even increase it both in duration and intensity, though they may play havoc with the welfare of a number of victims and dependants. He may successively seduce a score of women without bad consequences to himself. Why is he doing wrong? In the name of what do you peremptorily summon him to return to the path of virtue? In the name of altruistic pleasure? He happens to be one of those organisms which are not capable of it. In the name of a state of society which is to come into existence long after he has mouldered to dust in the family

mausoleum of the Gaunts? His reply will be that as a sensible man he lives for the present, not for a future in which he will have no share. Suppose you could induce him to try a course of virtue, or of altruism if the term is more scientific, what in his case would be the practical result? Would it not be a painful conflict between passion and conscience, or perhaps, in the terms of the now current philosophy, between presented sensations on the one hand, and represented or re-represented sensations on the other? Is it not probable that he would end his days before that conflict had been brought to a close? Its fruits, however imperfect, would, of course, be both happy and precious in the estimation of theism; but in the estimation of any ethical philosophy founded on pleasure and pain, what could they be but pleasure, unquestionable pleasure, lost, and pain, pain of a distressing kind, incurred? So with other organisms, which, as thoroughgoing evolutionism would lead us to think, are pursuing their congenial, though conventionally reprobated, walks of life. The assas-

sin, the robber, and the sharper have their status in nature, as well as any other members of the predatory tribes. It is laid down that the life and interest of the social organism must rank above the lives and interests of its component particles, the individual men, and form the measure of their desires and actions. This, however, would seem to be an arbitrary assumption, and one on which morality cannot be firmly founded. Can the term "organism" itself be applied to society otherwise than in a metaphorical or imperfect sense? Of the particles of which society consists, each, unlike the particles of a true organism, has a consciousness and a unit of its own. Further enforcement at least is needed.

Apprehension of a temporary disturbance of social order, however, or even of an ethical interregnum, is not our highest motive for desiring to know whether the universe is guided by a Providence or borne blindly on by a material evolution, and whether there is or is not a supreme power on the side of virtue. No question surely can be more practical than these, unless we are con-

tent to be as the beasts that perish; a fate to which probably few are deliberately resigned, however, amidst the business or the enjoyments of life we may put aside the thought of our mortality.

In what position then, since the discovery of evolution or, as we should rather say, to avoid building too much on a particular theory, since the recent revelations of science, is the theistic hypothesis left?

Clearly, there is an end of our faith, so far as cosmogony is concerned, in the sacred books of the Hebrews, from which our notions of creation and the Creator have hitherto been largely derived. Those books must now be placed on the same shelf with the sacred books of other races. They are superior to their fellows no doubt, not only in loftiness of imagination, but in comparative approach to scientific truth, especially in regard to the great fact of the unity of creation, which astronomy and spectrum-analysis have confirmed. It is in virtue of this superiority that they have so long retained

their hold upon our minds. But their narrative of creation is hopelessly at variance with scientific fact, while the authority of some of them as the alleged works of Moses, even if it could give them a title to acceptance as records of events anterior to the existence of man, has been totally overthrown. The poetry of the Hebrew books will never die. Of their cosmogony we must, once for all, clear our minds. We are in the position of the philosophers of Greece when, having emancipated themselves from the legendary cosmogony of the polytheistic religion of the state, they faced with open minds the problem of existence.

With belief in a first cause the theory of evolution need not interfere. Evolution cannot have evolved itself. It is a mode or process, not a creative force. Some power there must have been, if we can trust the indications of our intelligence on such a subject, to set evolution on foot and to direct it in its course. Those who think to account for all things by the hypothesis of a vast alternation between homogeneity and

heterogeneity stand in need of a prime motor; otherwise, whichever of the alternate processes they take postulates the other as its antecedent, and so backwards to infinity. In plain language, they must have something to set the see-saw going. If this objection is said to be rather metaphysical, the answer is that a hypothesis, before it can be applied to facts, must be shown to be intelligible and tenable in itself; a condition not fulfilled by a hypothesis of original alternation.

It may be that evolution, as some say, gives us a worthier idea of the majesty of the Deity, who, instead of perpetual intervention, has, once for all, commanded his agents, and endowed them with the power, to work out the universal plan. At the same time the Deity seems to be removed to an immeasurable distance from us. It is difficult to understand how we can retain the practice of prayer, at least for anything material. Belief in special providence evolution seems absolutely to preclude.

The old proof of the existence of a Deity, which satisfied Paley and the authors of the

Bridgewater treatises, was the design assumed to be visible in creation. But what is visible in creation is not design; it is only adaptation, from which we are not warranted in directly inferring design. Adapted to each other things must have been; otherwise the world could not have come into existence, or, when it had come into existence, have held together. The arrangement of the vertebræ is necessary to the support of the skull. The position of the pebble beneath is necessary to the support of the pebble above, though we do not take the adaptation for a proof of design. We have no other world to compare with this, and, therefore, no means of learning what could come by chance or blind evolution and what could not. Paley's man who finds the watch is able to compare it with unwrought matter. He knows that human artificers exist. He is a man himself and can recognize the work of his fellow.

The argument from design has been turned on the upholders by the opponents of theism. It has been said that contrivance is human

and inconsistent with our ideas of omnipotence, which would produce perfection at once by fiat. But here we are simply beyond the range of our intelligence. We cannot divine which way Deity would take to its ends. There is nothing repugnant to reason in the belief that what presents itself to our minds as effort and a struggle towards perfection, rather than perfection by fiat, may be the course chosen by the Master of the universe and form its law. On the other hand, it is evident that Paley's analogy breaks down again in this respect, that God is not like a mechanic, showing his skill by his handling of matter, which, with its qualities and its resistance, is given to him from without. He is himself the Creator of the matter with which he deals.

Science, it is true, frequently uses teleological language, language such as implies design. But from this little can be inferred, except that our established phraseology is theistic and that science falls involuntarily into the use of the familiar terms.

From mere inspection of the universe we

can only infer the existence of such a Deity as the universe, including the nature of man, discloses. This seems to be justly urged by Hume; and a mere inspection of the universe, at least of our part of it, can hardly be said to disclose a moral Creator. The Creator disclosed is one who sends not only his sunshine and his rain, but his earthquakes, his plagues, and his famines, alike upon the just and the unjust; who takes away by death the good man from the household which loves him and depends on him for bread, as well as the wicked man from his den of crime; who, both among human beings and among brutes, seems to scatter pain and misery broadcast. What we see and experience may be, and probably is, but a faint glimpse of the universal plan. But from what we see and experience the combination of omnipotence with beneficence, as we conceive the one or the other, cannot be inferred. For their ultimate union we must look behind the veil. True, human effort is repaid, but it is human.

In our own planet waste, wreck, and abor-

tion hold divided empire with economy, perfection, and fruitfulness. In our satellite, the telescope tells us, they reign alone. Nothing apparently warrants us in assuming that the character of the Creator is reflected by one side of creation, not by the other.

Pessimism may be said to be the reverie of disappointment and satiety, with an infusion of Byronic sentiment and of the melancholy of Schopenhauer and Leopardi. But it has, at all events, been able to show that the theological optimism against which it revolts is only less irrational than itself. It has, at all events, put an end to the attempts of the complacent optimist to vindicate the Creator and establish the theistic hypothesis by representing pain, suffering, and evil generally as mere negation. To give that pious legerdemain its death-blow a Lisbon earthquake, a famine, or a pestilence is not needed. A toothache will suffice.

Neither from sense nor from science can we be said to have actual proof of the existence of intelligence other than our

own, or even of any life other than that which exists on our planet. Such is the fact. But the mere statement of it seems to carry the conviction that the range of our senses, even with the aid of science and all its instruments, must be narrow. It is inconceivable that we should be the sole conscious denizens of the universe. As has been said before, there is no reason for the presumption that the information of our senses, or of science, which draws its knowledge from the senses, is exhaustive. We are in a universe our knowledge of which is probably mere purblindness. Gravitation is only a fact observed but unexplained. Mind itself, as it is in us, may not be ultimate.

It seems impossible to imagine our intelligence, whatever the mode of its development, is without an intelligent author.

Science shows that the universe, so far as it falls within our vision, is pervaded and ruled by a single power, which, as its operations reveal themselves to our minds, we cannot help divining to be a mind. Monotheism is at all events perfectly consistent

with the results of physical science; while with polytheism science has done away. Hence, science and religion, even the most fervent religion, have been able to dwell together in the intellects of Newton and Faraday.

In metaphysical arguments there is little comfort. Anselm thought that he had proved the existence of a Deity by the argument that our notion of the Deity was perfection and that perfection implied existence. Descartes reproduced the argument substantially under a different form. Existence must enter into our notion of a centaur or a griffin, and is, in those cases, notional only, affording no proof that the thing of which we think is real. To all proofs of the existence of God derived from supposed mental necessity, it seems to be a sufficient answer that belief in God has been, and is, absent from some minds otherwise sound and normal. These seem like relics of the scholastic fancy that the mind is a casket containing in itself knowledge about the universe which is capable of being educed by a logical process

apart from observation of the universe itself. Nothing metaphysical has ever taken much hold on general intelligence or exerted much influence on practical faith. A fervent religion, metaphysically kindled, or even a lively conception of the character of the Deity derived from metaphysical speculation, it would surely be hard to find.

Intuitionists would settle the question by laying it down that there are always present in intelligence, whether developed or nascent, three ideas; consciousness of the world, consciousness of self, and consciousness of God. As has been already said, there are men who, if they know the contents of their own intelligence, are without a consciousness of God. Can this intuition of a Deity be proved to exist in the mind quite independently of any notion derived from without either through education or tradition? If it can, we may accept it as decisive. If it cannot, its testimony fails. We need not go on to ask what sort of Deity it is that is thus intuitively revealed, that of Jehovah, that of Jupiter, that of Allah, that of the All-

Father presented by the teachings of Jesus, an amalgam of them all, or a cold and filmy abstraction.

On the other hand, there can be no doubt as to the historical importance of the religious sense in man, or as to the failure of some of the attempts of evolutionists to wrest the history of religion into conformity with their system. The source of religion has been found in dreams about departed chieftains. It would be curious to see the connection traced between such dreams and the religion of Jesus, or that of Bacon, Pascal, Butler, and Newton. Did all primeval men dream about departed chieftains? How did the religious tendency become universal? How could a dream lead even to the most primitive forms of worship, such as the adoration of the sun? That religion began in fetish-worship is a theory held by philology to be precarious. That its primitive form was a worship of the powers of nature, especially of those which most influence the life of man, and of the sun above all, may be taken to be true; but this accounts only

for the selection of objects, not for the existence of the sentiment itself. We can hardly imagine that the grandeur and powers of nature produce any sentiment of awe or tendency to worship in animals. Neither in the primitive direction of the religious sentiment nor in its aberrations, brutish or cruel as some of them were, is there anything to repel the suggestion that it had its source in reality and betokens a connection between humanity and the Spirit of the Universe.

Paley may have been right in saying that the Deity could reveal himself only in miracle. If he does not reveal he may yet manifest himself without miracle through human nature and history, through the discoveries of science and by other than supernatural means. If there is a Deity, the reasonable presumption surely is that he will manifest himself to creatures capable of receiving the manifestation. His counsel may be that instead of his revealing himself to us, we should feel after him and find him.

Rational theology has, perhaps, hardly taken sufficient notice of our sense of beauty in its

different grades, from the sublimity of the star-lit heaven to the loveliness of the humming-bird, or of the poetry and art which are the expressions of that sense. It would be difficult to account for beauty, or the sense of beauty, by physical evolution, while their presence and the charm which they throw over life seem to bespeak a certain tenderness on the part of the Being in whose power we are which softens the stern aspect of evolution. The same may be said of the poetic element in man, which as yet no one has undertaken to trace to physical evolution; of the sentimental love, which is not essential to procreation; and of the moral beauty, which, though connected, is not identical with practical usefulness. Adaptation is produced by evolution; but it is only in a secondary sense that we call adaptation beautiful. Darwin's loss of taste for poetry and art is remarkable; he seems to have felt it as a defect and as the atrophy of an essential part of his nature, not as the necessary result of devotion to scientific truth.

Man's notion of God has risen from nature-

worship, it may be from fetishism, to the conception of the Heavenly Father who is the idealization of our own moral nature. Anthropomorphism still clings to our theism; the very name of Father involves it; so do those of Benefactor and Judge; nor can we think of a personal God without importing human personality into the idea. But a shortcoming in our power of conception does not prove the object of our thoughts to be unreal. We fail to conceive infinity, yet we are sure that the universe is infinite. For the purpose of natural theology and especially of inquiries like the present, it might be well to say Power or Soul of the Universe instead of God.

Of the attempts to construct for us a religion without a God, it may surely be said that they serve only to show the tenacity of the religious sentiment and the void which is left in the heart by the departure of religion. Of the Comtist Religion of Humanity we have spoken already. We have only to ask once more how it is possible for us to bow down in adoration to an abstraction which is insensible to our worship. An

abstraction, in fact, Comte's Great Being must be; it cannot even have so much substance as there would be in a generalization, since, history being unfinished, the basis for the generalization is incomplete. The Positivist ritual and calendar, which are a fanciful reproduction of Catholicism, appear to have taken little hold compared with the philosophic part of the system; while even the philosophic part has taken hold less as a scientific solution than as a negation of the theistic view. The alleged account of history as a succession of theistic, metaphysical, and Positivist conceptions of the universe cannot be verified by facts, which fail especially in respect to the metaphysical period. The Founder of the Religion of Humanity believed in the finality of his own system, assuming that progress had reached its completion in it, and that he could cast society into its final mould. The limits which he undertook to set to human knowledge have, in one direction, already been overpast. Supposing his theory of the three periods, the theistic, the metaphysical, and the positive,

were true, how could he tell that Positivism was the last birth of time or that destiny might not have a fourth period, possibly even a reversion to theism in store?

Of Spiritualism little need be said. It testifies to the craving of mankind for something beyond sense, and for something to fill up the blank left by the failure of religious faith, as well as to the desire of renewing communion with the lost objects of affection. It can hardly be admitted even to have a good title to its name, since the dead are made to "materialize," and to use material instruments of communication.

Nor can it be necessary to dwell on the different kinds of mysticism in which solitaries or small circles have taken refuge, thinking that by seclusion they can shut out the evil world, or soar above it by spiritual ecstasy. We are not in Asia; and Lamaism, though Schopenhauer would commend to us something like it, with universal self-effacement in prospect as the ultimate paradise, is not likely to afford satisfaction here.

Others, Seeley, for instance, would give us,

as a substitute for definite belief in God, a religion of enthusiastic admiration. "The words 'religion' and 'worship,'" says Seeley, "are commonly and conveniently appropriated to the feelings with which we regard God; but these feelings, love, awe, admiration, which together make up worship, are felt in various combinations for human beings and even for inanimate objects." "It is not," he says, "exclusively, but only *par excellence*, that religion is directed towards God." Religion he elsewhere describes as "that higher life of man which is sustained by admiration," adding that "it has its essence in worship or some kind of enthusiastic contemplation seeking for expression in outward acts." If such is the origin of art, he is prepared to call art religion. Enthusiastic nationality with him is religion. He, and perhaps not he alone, makes of the nation a god. This surely is mere playing with words or worse; it is an attempt to cheat us into the impression that we have a religious belief when we have none. The objects of admiration, social, scientific, or æsthetic, however salutary or

elevating may be their influence, are not a Father in heaven. Ask the widow with her fatherless children whether they are. Nor does the culture necessary for these lofty and refined emotions extend, or bid fair within any calculable time to extend, to the masses of the people. A clown who cannot read or write and who earns his bread by the coarsest work can take in the idea of God and of divine rewards and punishments as thoroughly as Professor Seeley with all his cultured capacity for admiration. But it would be difficult to infuse into the clown a religion of national aggrandizement or of art.

"Cosmic emotion" presents itself only as a substitute for religious emotion, since nothing has been said about embodying it in worship. It comes to us commended by poetic quotations, and for common hearts stands in need of the commendation. Transfer of affection from an all-loving Father to an adamantine universe is a process which needs all the aid that the witchery of poetry can supply, though the poetry itself, for aught that we can see, must be ground out by the same

mill of evolution which grinds out virtue and affection. The symbols of cosmic emotion seem to be the feelings produced by the two objects of Kant's peculiar reverence, the starry heavens and the moral faculties of man. But, after all, what are these but aggregations of molecules in a certain stage of evolution? To be able to feel cosmic emotion, at all events, you must be sure that you have a cosmos. The phrase law is taken by science from theology, or from jurisprudence. Science can tell us nothing but phenomena accumulated by experience and methodized, which would not make a law, properly speaking, though they had been observed through myriads of years. In "cosmos" also a theistic connotation seems to lurk, since order there could hardly be without an ordering power.

Too little notice has been taken by moral philosophers of the different situations and circumstances of men. They write as though all men were capable of philosophy and free to follow its sublime advice. All men are capable of religion; all men can understand

the force of a divine command and the doctrine of future reward or punishment; but it is vain to expect that a coal-heaver will appreciate Shaftesbury's delineation of the beauty of virtue like the persons of refinement to whom it was addressed, or be made to glow with cosmic emotion like Walt Whitman; and until the structure of society has been radically changed, coal-heavers, or multitudes as little philosophic or poetic, there will continue to be. We may begin to think that we have reëstablished religion, when a practical impression, such as would exhibit itself in worship or something equivalent to it, has been made on common and uncultivated minds.

If no divine command for the practice of virtue can be shown, if no assurance of the virtuous man's reward, such as Paley assumes, can be given, moral philosophy must, it would appear, be content simply to take the observation of human nature as its basis and to build its system on the natural desires of man, offering them such satisfaction as is consistent with the welfare

of the community and the race. We naturally desire health, and to be healthy means to be temperate and continent; we desire, for ourselves and our families, the means of living, and to obtain them we must be industrious, frugal, and of good repute; we desire domestic happiness, and to obtain it we must practise the domestic virtues; we desire the good-will of our fellow-men with the advantages which it brings, and to obtain it we must practise the virtues of good members of society and good citizens. There is no such thing as altruism in the literal sense of that term. Self is present in all we do, though the self is that of a being who desires love and fellowship as well as food and raiment; with which qualification the philosophy which has resolved morality into self-interest, though much decried, would be right enough. No man ever really acts against what he apprehends at the time to be his interest, though his interest may lead him to sacrifice his animal or individual to his domestic or social desires.

The good which we do to others yields

us a deeper and more lasting satisfaction than the good which we do to ourselves. This is a pregnant fact and may seem to indicate the purpose of the author of our nature, if our nature has an author, and to promise a social consummation before the close. How far devotion to the interests of the race and heroic or philanthropic action will be affected by the departure of theistic belief will be seen when the kingdom of atheism or agnosticism has fully come. But it is not by such a figment as posthumous fame that the hearts of reasoning beings will be lifted above selfish desires. Nor is it likely that tribalism, however exalted or refined by nationality and patriotism, will act as it did on the Greek or Roman, in whom still lived, though in a sublimated form, the gregarious instinct of the herd.

Intellectual effort, while it implies moral conditions, such as may dispose to labour and raise above sensual indulgence, has motive powers and attractions of its own apart from any which theism supplies. Yet we can hardly feel sure that there is not a

theistic element in the scientific conscience, which sacrifices not only ease and pleasure but sometimes reputation and everything else to the pursuit of truth.

Whether this is, as Leibnitz thought, the best, or, as Schopenhauer thought, the worst, of all possible worlds, neither of them could really tell. Neither of them had any means of verifying his hypothesis by comparison or in any other way. Practically it is a very different world for different men. For the Roman emperor this was not the worst of all possible worlds; by the Roman slave it could hardly be deemed the best. Man's temporal estate is apparently capable of indefinite improvement within the limits of mortality, though the improvement will not cancel the sufferings of the generations that are past.

It takes, we are told, a period of time longer than man's recorded history for a ray of light to reach the earth from the remotest telescopic star. Yet the starry field swept by the telescope is inconceivably less than that which we must assume to lie beyond. In such a universe what is the life

of a man? Our little being is lost in immensity. This thought and that of the impenetrable mystery of existence are likely, rather than cosmic emotion, worship of humanity, or any of the other substitutes for theism, to take possession of the human mind if the belief in a God is withdrawn.

THE END

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